

LETTERS FROM CHINA

By
JAY DENBY

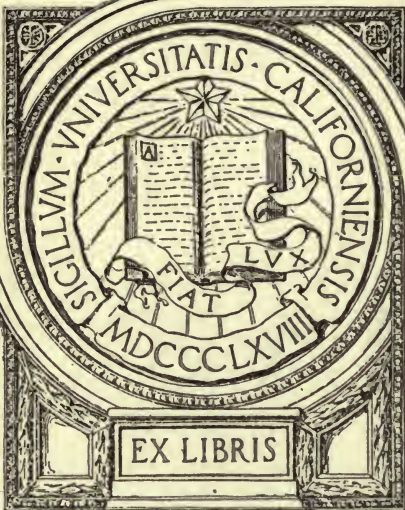


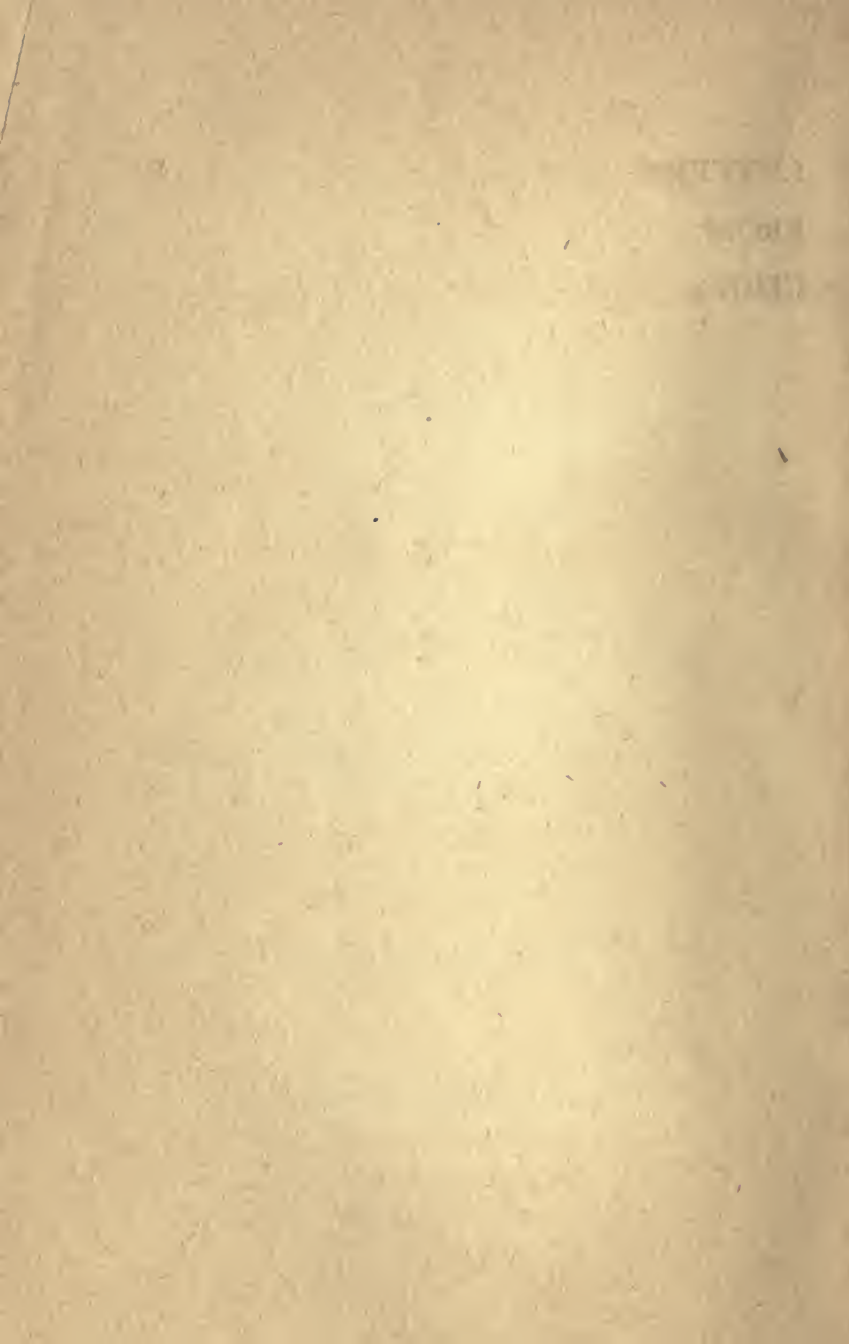
Illustrated by H. W. G. HAYTER



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**LETTERS
FROM
CHINA**

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LETTERS FROM CHINA

AND SOME EASTERN SKETCHES

By JAY DENBY



ILLUSTRATED BY H. W. G. HAYTER

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TO THE
AMERICAN INDIAN

Carpenter

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PREFACE

THE aim of "Letters from China" is to convey an impression of life in the Far East as it appeared to an individual for whom the serious side of any subject has never possessed so powerful an attraction as has its humorous aspect.

I offer this explanation in the hope that it may be regarded, by indulgent readers, as a plea in extenuation of the book's many faults. The stories are mainly incidents within the actual experience of the writer, who has attempted to portray them in their own Oriental colouring rather than by means of precise literary expression.

JAY DENBY.

SHANGHAI, CHINA,

October 1, 1911.

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LETTERS FROM CHINA

No. I

S.S. "CULVESTON,"

Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

So I off at last for China ; the land flowing with silk and money ; the land of mystery and romance ; populated with polite, pig-tailed people who are willing to pay for the inestimable benefits of modern civilization in hard cash. Not because they want modern civilization, but because they do not, and yet have realized that if one does not want what is termed civilization nowadays, one must be strong enough to decline it in a civilized manner, *i.e.*, with a powerful army and navy and the most up-to-date engines for destroying life upon the largest scale so far invented ; for experience has taught us that, with all, the only reliable way to preserve life at this stage of our development is to render oneself pre-eminent as a destroyer of the same.

It is really surprising how a comfortable feeling of strength helps a diplomatist to reason logically in order to prove that he is in the right. Besides, if he is wrong, it doesn't matter so much, does it?

China is not yet strong enough to throw a boot at any one who is trying to disturb her sleep.

Already we have taught the Chinese to value warships at our own estimate, and started them in the race for supremacy of armament ; the winner of which—as he will tell you himself, even without being asked—has expended all the effort, brain-power, and money that have enabled him to win, in order to uphold his right to keep the universal piece.

I have always pictured China as a richly dowered widow of a certain age, whose education has been sadly neglected ; and who is possessed of a *naïveté* so free from self-consciousness that she not only can and does wipe her nose on her sleeve, but stoutly maintains that this is the correct thing to do.

Around her are the export travellers of various nations, loudly insisting that it is extremely bad form to dispense with handkerchiefs, and offering to sell her some at a reasonable price, with the essential points of the only true fourteen different religions printed on the box.

From all one hears of China, with her civilization centuries old, one cannot help speculating as to whether, in the dim and distant past, she progressed to such an advanced state of knowledge that she decided voluntarily to adopt Cicero's ideal of "philosophical retirement and contemplation," which even I myself, although at least to some extent civilized, must own to a partiality for, especially when I should be at work. The fact that she has been long civilized is evidenced in her inordinate and unholy greed for money.

When I arrive in China I hope and trust I shall never meet a Chinaman who asks me why our women wear hobble skirts, and tight shoes with such high heels that they are able to walk no better than Chinese women before the anti-footbinding movement was instituted.

If I am asked any questions of this nature, I presume the only course open to me will be to smile, assume a superior air, and say, "Pooh ! pooh ! really, you know, you couldn't understand if I explained." This is the only answer I could give, and would at least have the merit of being true, because the questioner certainly could not understand if I did explain—no one could.

What a relief to know that the leavetaking

is over, and that the voice of the sniffer is stilled ! Women are all darlings, of course (each of them in her own particular way), but they can never be induced to forego an opportunity of weeping for the mere exhilaration of the thing ; and if they have a really fetching sniff, no power on earth can induce them to muffle its plaintive note in a handkerchief of adequate size.

* * * *

I must tell you about one of our passengers, who describes himself as a Southern American. It is interesting to note how he insists upon the distinction " South " when describing his birth-place. Many, many times I have noticed—during an age when universal peace is being seriously considered as a feasibility—the bitter feeling that exists between men from the north and south of the same country, or even from adjacent towns. This is evidently the inherited lust for war that the noble object of arbitration has to contend with, and which we see exemplified in football riots.

To digress further, for a moment, from the subject of our American, two of the engineers on this ship illustrate my meaning perfectly. It appears that the fact of their being bad friends is notorious, and in talking to one of them recently,

the name of the other happened to crop up in conversation. Directly the name of the second was mentioned, the first surprised me by the bitterness of his comments upon his erstwhile companion's parentage, habits, appearance, and apparently irreclaimable depravity. At this I naturally pleaded for a little tolerance, in view of the fact that the individual in question was of the same nationality as my companion. Unfortunately, I used the words "he is a Scotchman like yourself." My friend's face immediately became suffused with a flush of anger.

"Like mysel'?" he replied, with deadly calm; "like mysel'? d—— it, mon, d'ye no ken he cooms fra' Kirkcaldy?"

I admitted that I was unaware of the fact, and enquired as to the locality of his own birth-place.

"I'm fra' Grangemouth," and, favouring me with a glare of conviction that with that magic word he had dispensed with all necessity for explanation or excuse for argument, he stalked away with his head uptilted like a sergeant-major of the band in full regimentals.

I subsequently ascertained that these towns are nearly twenty-five miles apart; so that apparently there are still a few difficulties in the way of universal peace.

But to return to our American—I beg his pardon, South American—whose forceful personality pervades the entire ship like the smell of cooking in a cheap restaurant. Yesterday four of us were discussing Canada, and I had just ventured an opinion upon the subject in hand, when a voice like the bark of a big dog suddenly aroused exclaimed, “Hell !” ; the long, snaky form of my American fellow-voyager undid itself from an adjacent deck-chair, and his face—which is lined like the entrance to Clapham Junction Station—made its terrifying appearance from under an enormous Panama hat.

He deliberately dragged his chair up alongside mine, utterly ignoring a deep groan to which one of my companions was impolite enough to give vent, and tapped me on the knee with a long, bony forefinger, having a knuckle about the same size as my knee, and which was attached to a typically Darwinian arm.

“Say,” he said, “you was talking about Canada, eh?”

“When?” I enquired evasively.

“Why, just now.”

“Well, yes,” I admitted reluctantly ; “but none of us professes to know much about it.”

“Pooh !” he protested, with a deprecatory wave of the hand, “there aint no call to tell *me*

that—I heard some. Now, d'you know who *made* Canada? ”

“ So far as my slight knowledge will allow me to venture an opinion, the Creator included it amongst His other work,” I hazarded.

“ Aha ! there's where you run off the track. Now you listen to *me*. I ain't talkin' about who started it ; I asked who *made* it. See now, I ain't throwin' no bookays at myself when I tell you that if it hadn't been for us Americans it ud a stopped where the Creator left it. No, *sir!* Americans made Canada what she is to-day. It was American farmers came in an' took up the finest of your Canadian wheat-lands—which are *the* finest, an' they've got 'em to-day. That's Canadian land. Then there's manufactures. When our manufacturers went there first, your nesters [settlers] used to look at 'em side-ways ; they didn't warnt to meet 'em no moren a yaller dawg, but now ! why, say ! there's the glad hand stickin' out ov every door. An' why? Simply because our manufacturers put up factories to turn out goods to hit 'em where they lived at cheaper prices. No need to talk about the goods neither—there they were, an' the goods spoke for themselves.”

“ Canned meats? ” enquired some silly ass.

7 “ Canned hell ! who wants canned meats——”

" Ah, who? " I interrupted.

" An' there ain't nothen wrong with our canned meats neither, let me tell you ; the British War Office buys moren ever."

" British War Office? " we enquired in chorus.

" Yes."

" Do you know anything about our War Office? " some one enquired despondently.

" Nothen to speak of."

" Ah ! " we all sighed dejectedly, as we rose in a body and left him.

As I want this letter to be posted in Algiers, which port we are rapidly approaching, I must now conclude, and with love to all at home and my duty to yourself, subscribe myself,

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. II

S.S. "CULVESTON,"
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

I do not propose to give you a description of Algiers, or, indeed, any of the ports at which we touch, as the same have been described by both abler exaggerators than myself who pay flying visits, and also, which is of far more importance, by people who have had time to study the various towns in question and have written them up thoroughly. Still, I think our method of studying the inhabitants was an excellent one. We sat outside one of the *cafés* in the shade, drank cold Bock beer, and allowed the populace to walk past us in procession. Presumably every nationality in the world supplied a representative in national costume for our inspection, except perhaps the Esquimaux, so that we had an interesting and instructive time.

After sitting thus for half an hour, the American arrived with a guide-book, and we

had to drive him away with lumps of sugar, but promised to let him tell us about the things he had seen when we returned on board.

Miss Snodgrass, the girl who was crying down my right sleeve as we left the docks, is keeping very fit, and does not appear to be affected by the heat. This is not the case with all the girls, however, one of whom is very fat, and the heat has given her skin the appearance of that of a boiled fowl. Even her mother shuts her eyes when she kisses her daughter good-night.

* * * * *

We also have a missionary on board. He is, at heart, a really good fellow, but so apologetic as to be a nuisance.

He apologizes whenever he walks within five yards of one, when he sits down, and when he gets up. He begged everybody's pardon for being seasick. Yesterday he apologized to a sailor who accidentally tripped him up with the bight of a rope. The flabbergasted shellback, however, mistook his action for sarcasm, and shuffled away swearing lustily.

His wife is a dear little thing, but very timid, and I fear her life is hopelessly dull. Yesterday three of us rounded her up in a corner of the

deck and made her laugh till she writhed and emitted strange noises.

To see this weary-eyed, usually silent little thing rolled up in a ball, unable to open her eyes, which were streaming with tears, and occasionally gurgling "Ooo-oooo-oh, dooon't!" would have made a man laugh in a dentist's chair.

Arbuthnot's story about the man who went to Covent Garden Ball arrayed in tin armour, and became accidentally "toxed" on account of having to drink whisky and soda by means of a straw passed through the slit in his helmet because he had forgotten how to open the lid, made her scream; and when he came to the part where the reveller either fell or was pushed downstairs, and bent himself so badly that the joints of his armour refused to work, and his subsequent adventures whilst in that condition up to the time when he had to be "opened" with a tin-opener, she gave in and squirmed till her hair came down.

What a subtly attractive sound is this unaffected, joyous music of a woman's laughter! To compare it to a peal of bells is a gross libel upon women in general that can be fully appreciated by any one who has lived near a church.

Whilst she was lying back in a state of abject, shaking helplessness, her husband arrived, and looked at her over his spectacles with an expression of blank amazement. He said, "My dear ! My dear !" at which she waved one arm weakly, replied "Ooo-ooo," and wagged her head.

Arbuthnot tried to clear the matter up by explaining that she had been telling us funny stories, which she strenuously tried to deny, but without avail.

When we left them together her husband was looking at her over his spectacles in a state of speechless bewilderment, and she was resting a hand on his arm and making mouths at him in her endeavours to explain, without, however, getting any further than "Oooo-oooo."

We have three more stories ready for her to-morrow, for we have registered a vow to alter the look in her eyes before she reaches Hong-kong and continues her disciplinary existence in continual dread of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Personally, I have never met the devil, but, wrong though I may be, I must confess that I have never yet had occasion to find serious fault with either the world or the flesh.

If I were thoroughly disgruntled with both,

however, I should keep quiet about it ; for it is my firm belief that a man who goes about continually whining is of less use in the world than a nasty smell.

* * * * *

Nothing of sufficient importance to chronicle has occurred during the past three weeks, and I am afraid I shall have to carry you to China more quickly than I intended, for, to be candid, the sea air makes me as lazy as a man whose wife keeps a successful boarding-house, and talking to Miss Snodgrass is a far more interesting occupation than writing letters.

The trip has been most enjoyable, both the Captain—who, by the way, is alluded to as Long-fellow because he stood on the bridge at midnight—and the chief steward, “Gravy” (short for Mr. Gray), being, as is usually the case on passenger ships, thoroughly good fellows.

The amount of irritating nonsense that captains and pursers of passenger steamers have to put up with is incredible, and they must be wonderfully gifted with politeness, cheerfulness, and good temper in order to get through the day without clubbing somebody to death. There is always an old gentleman amongst the passengers who has been used to having his newspaper warmed for him in the morning and

his food exactly suited to his eccentricities and peculiarities, which latter have become petrified into changeless form by the flux of time. When the stewards serve him in accordance with the customs of the ship, he has great difficulty to prevent himself bursting out crying with rage. He storms and ramps with senile decrepitude, uttering sophistical tirades in the cracked falsetto of dotish excitement. He is a nautical nuisance, who can be compared only with the spoiled child on a voyage, who cadges cakes and sweets of which he subsequently relieves himself with noisy renunciation during the night.

Again, there is the lady whose figure is far nearer perfection than her breeding, and whose physical attraction has transported her from Poplar to Park Lane. She alludes to servants as "menials," and "keeps them in their place," because the line of demarcation between herself and servility is so faintly defined that it requires continually pointing out ; for she is aware that she herself escaped drudgery only, as it were, by the skin of her shoulders.

* * * * *

I find that I shall just have time to jot down my impressions on approaching Shanghai. The first tangible sign that one is getting into touch with that land of mystery, China, is

the appearance of the coast shipping. We passed quite close to a large junk crowded with Chinese, and a stranger contrivance it is difficult to imagine. Picture a great, lumbering hull, roughly built of very heavy hewn logs. The body is shaped like a punt, with the stem and stern raised high out of the water, and is fitted with heavy lee-boards.

This strange craft had five masts standing at varying angles out of the perpendicular, not one of them being fitted with stays or shrouds. Upon these masts were set very lofty rectangular sails, stretched upon cross battens of bamboo, presumably in order to prevent bellying, and controlled by dozens of cords, each one fastened to the after end of the sail battens. All of these cords were led together into a single rope before reaching the steersman's hand. The sides forming the freeboard are carried well aft of the transom and rudderhead. On each side of the bow is painted an eye, in order to enable the junk to see where she is going, and on the stern, gaudy pictures of weird and hideous dragons.

The repulsiveness of the latter must be designed to present the average Chinese countenance in a comparatively agreeable light. After examining the faces of several of the crew I was thankful that I saw the dragons first.

The man who was steering possessed a physiognomy that resembled the human face only vaguely. It was a kind of rude insinuation, or facial sneer aimed at the beauty of the human species. I can only describe it by saying that it would be utterly impossible for him to "make faces" at any one, this object being already attained for him by nature.

Nothing that could be done to that face would make it worse—not even if one skinned it. In a spirit of idle curiosity I tried to imagine slight alterations to this end, but found that nature, or the man's mother, or both combined, had, in one supreme effort, concentrated all the superlative ugliness the world has ever contained or imagined, and worked it into that one devoted visage, given it life, and let it go, so that the world might see to what lengths ugliness can reach when the mighty forces of nature are brought to bear with that one specific object, and thus encourage others to rest content with such beauty as had fallen to their lot.

Miss Snodgrass suggested that perhaps he had been frightened at birth. If his mother bears any resemblance to himself, Miss Snodgrass is most probably correct in her surmise. I shall never call any one ugly again.

I next noticed what I took to be a yellow

mud-bank ahead, but was informed by a resident of Shanghai, who had joined the ship at Hong-kong, that this was the river water. There is a distinct and clearly defined line which ebbs and flows with the tide, but never breaks up. This does not augur well for the drainage of a densely populated district.

Shanghai lies some distance up the Whangpoo River, which is broad, turbid, and unbeautiful. Anchored just inside the mouth of this muddy stream are several war junks, armed with a brass cannon apiece, resembling somewhat those used at the Battle of Trafalgar, after due allowance is made for the fact that they are not so modern. A Maxim gun in a Thames skiff would put one of these fighting machines out of action in two or three minutes.

Our vessel steamed quite close to one of the banks of the river, so that I could see the Chinese at work in their fields. The land is extremely fertile, intersected with creeks, and cultivated mostly in patches. Every foot is under either crops or corpses.

I have always been under the impression that the Chinese worship their ancestors, but fail to understand how any one can worship a man and use him for manure as well. Human remains are not buried ; they are laid on the surface and

sometimes, but not always, covered with earth. I saw several coffins covered with straw only.

The land on each side of the river lies perfectly flat, and very little above water-level. As one approaches Shanghai the banks on each side are lined with wharves and warehouses until the Bund is reached.

The Bund consists of a fine road parallel to the river, and upon the waterside of this thoroughfare a succession of lawns is laid out, having a public garden with bandstand at the approach end. On the opposite bank are more wharves and a factory or two. Adjoining the foreign settlements and further up the river is the walled Native City. All these things, and more also, will I describe to thee later, when I have seen them properly.

Whilst I was waiting to go ashore, a Chinaman with a face like a rag doll that has been left out in the garden in the rain came up to me and said :—

“You wanchee catchee Shanghai money? suppose you wanchee, my can do.”

“I beg your pardon?” I replied, unable to make out his meaning.

He looked at me patiently, and explained : “Suppose you go shoreside, follin money alle-same no use. You pay my follin money, my pay you China money all plopper. Can?”

"Can what?" I enquired. "Why on earth don't you talk longhand?"

"Parlez-vous Flançay?" he enquired, taking something out of his ear, which upon examination I discovered to be a printed paper giving the rates of money exchange, which I could make nothing of, but deducted that he wished me to exchange "follin" money for Chinese.

Then it occurred to me that this hollow-chested, disreputable yellow degenerate, with a dirty scalp and a pair of pants the seat of which flapped about his knees, not only had the right to call, but actually was calling me a foreigner, and it was borne in upon me that I was indeed a stranger in a strange land.

I afterwards discovered that I had been paid sixty cents short, and had received two brass dollars and four bad twenty-cent pieces. The worst aspect of the affair is that I shall never be able to recognize the animal again, because all Chinese are exactly alike, except the steersman I saw in the junk as we came in.

Will write you more fully when I am settled down ashore.

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. III

MRS. TIMM'S BOARDING HOUSE,
BUBBLING WELL, SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

I arrived in Shanghai on the 4th inst., and am staying at the above address, or, rather, I take my meals here. It would be untrue to say that I sleep here, because I have only lain down at night and scratched myself so far, but hope for the best, as I have ordered a new mosquito curtain.

I find that it is necessary to have a mosquito curtain with a small mesh. My old curtain had a large mesh, through which the hungry pests could easily obtain access to the cuticle of the would-be sleeper ; the result of which was inflammation and profanity.

Having stolen what little nourishment I have been able to obtain from a boarding-house diet, the mosquito, with its paunch distended at my expense, was unable to pass out again.

Here everything is very, very strange as to customs, and even language, into which latter

many words are introduced that one never hears round about Roehampton. For instance, the local inhabitants call a person who has not had time to have his constitution destroyed by the climate, his stomach ruined by the food, and his good temper utterly spoiled by Chinese servants, a "griffin." Although they affect to despise any such, one can see that they have a sneaking regard for the newcomer, who is as yet free from the awful disabilities under which they themselves suffer.

Do not think I am decrying the local residents, as this is the last thing I would do, even if only from a feeling of pity ; for who could suffer as these poor people do and be amiable? Consider the conditions—mosquitoes that are capable of thought and ingenuity, and that possess bodies as large as snipe ; thermometer 102° in the shade ; a very limited and poor diet on account of the fact that each and every article of food, except haricot beans, places one in imminent danger of a distinct complaint peculiar to itself ; constant and unremitting drenching with Carlsbad salts (which sell more readily than piece goods), and servants possessed of an inherited guile, improved and perfected through thousands of generations, combined with the bland, shameless mendacity that one usually

associates only with the vendor of a rubber plantation.

As if this state of affairs were not bad enough, there are quite a number of Scotchmen settled here, who, as is almost invariably the case, thrive, because they drink nothing but whisky (which is safer than the water), and, having survived a draughty, blue-nosed upbringing in the Land o' Cakes, can stand anything in the way of climate and food ; further, the mosquitoes (being, as I said before, intelligent) do not bite them, because their skins are so hairy and tough. They are in great demand as managers of businesses and superintendents of shipping lines, because they never give anything away, even to their relations.

Ladies are very scarce, and are spoiled, as a natural result ; probably on account of the fact that the unmarried ones receive, so I am informed, an average of four proposals a week. As they never accept any one with less than 400 taels per month (which expression I will explain later) and a relation on the Board of Directors or in the firm, as the case may be, they acquire, from the habit of continually rejecting suitors, a kind of " Wha' for ? " expression of countenance, which is very disconcerting to a stranger, and makes one get off

the pavement when they approach, even if there is plenty of room.

After they are married, however, they become quite nice, especially to any one who is a member of the Country Club, and who has a motor-car or a houseboat and a lot of discretion, coupled with a placid temperament.

I am of opinion that the tael is retained as a method of calculating payment and receipt by the Chinese principally on account of the fact that it does not actually exist, and in consequence cannot be faked or counterfeited. Anything that does exist is imitated, adulterated, and otherwise used as a method of deception by nearly every Chinaman over three years of age.

Money goes further here than anywhere else in the world. My salary this month is out of sight already, but the "compradores" (native cashiers) are always willing to advance anything one requires by paying one's bills, because they are so adept at working out the exchange and getting commissions on accounts paid.

The town is not at present prosperous, and one reason for the bad times now existing is that the Chinese cheat the foreigners in every conceivable way, and also in every inconceivable way, and if caught, which is seldom, are fined

\$5, or get a week's imprisonment and immediate re-employment on release. Even in prison they are generally better off than out of it. The penalty is so small that they consider the reward well worth the risk, corporal punishment being now abolished.

Should a foreigner, however, be discovered trying to cheat a Chinaman, he is awarded a long term of imprisonment, which means ruin, of course ; and if he happens to be a German, an American, or a Britisher, he is lucky to escape with his life.

This remark does not apply to promoters of rotten companies, for whom, as you are aware, no adequate punishment can be designed until the advance of science enables our legislators to administer a severer correction than the death penalty.

This muddled state of affairs is principally owing to the fact that all Chinese have to be tried at a place called the Mixed Court, which title it has acquired because everything about it is so mixed up that no one understands what to do.

Any Chinaman can bring a suit against a foreigner before that foreigner's Judge or Consul, but in cases where a foreigner has an action to bring against a Chinaman his only resort is the Mixed Court. The Mixed

Court is designed to form a happy medium between the law of nations and the abominable, muddle-headed corruption of China. In this Court sit a foreign assessor of the same nationality as the foreign litigant whose case is down for hearing, and the Mixed Court Magistrate, a Chinaman, who is chosen by the native authorities on account of his uncompromising Chineseness. The judgment of these two arbitrators must coincide, and the time of the Court is mostly taken up by the Chinese Magistrate's efforts to make the foreign assessor's judgment coincide with his own. This can never happen until China has an army and navy sufficiently strong to make the Powers see the force of her arguments, whether they are reasonable or the reverse. Chinese arguments being usually the reverse, her only hope of getting the better of a discussion is by force, even as we did in the days of those persuasive debaters, Raleigh, Drake, Clive, Phip and Dampier.

The Germans, Americans, and British consider it their duty to administer justice tempered with mercy, not to say generosity, to the man who is lodging a complaint *against* any of their nationals, a diplomatic arrangement of which the wisdom is apparent to all—who happen to

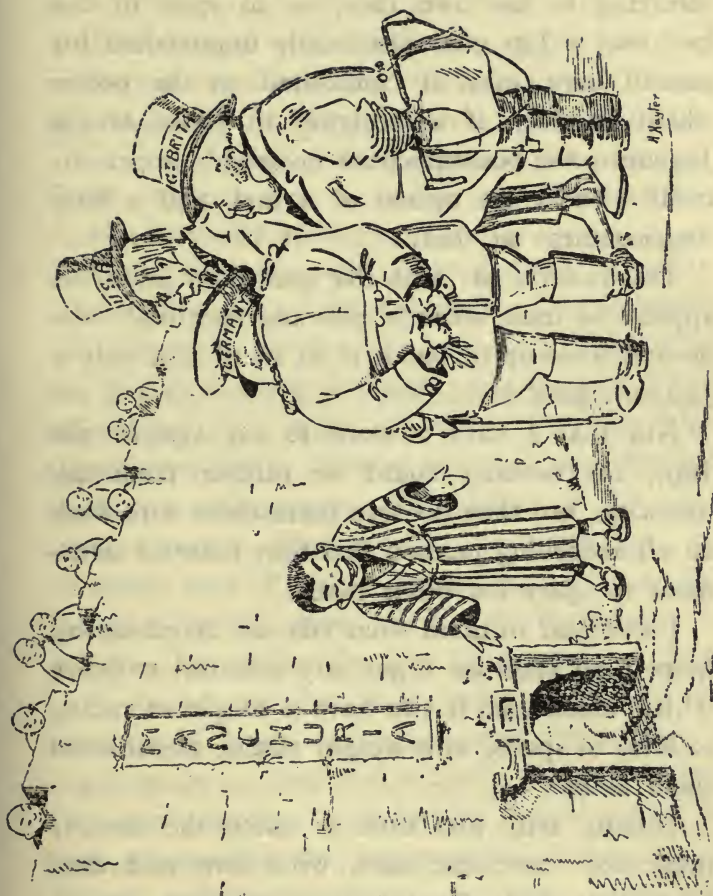
live at home. As the Chinese idea would appear to most distinctly favour their own nationals in the Mixed Court, the whole arrangement is a hopeless failure, and—like every other hesitating concession of a higher civilization to a lower—obstructive to advancement by reason of the activity of opposing forces.

The continual bickering and disputes which characterize the procedure at this Court culminated in a riot some five years ago, and one incident occurred which goes to prove that there is humour even in riots.

Many of the volunteers were stationed at the Country Club, and one citizen soldier showed such keenness to get to work that his eagerness was the cause of some speculation. When questioned as to whether he had any especial cause to desire wholesale slaughter, he replied, "Oh, no, it's not that exactly, but if they *will* riot I'm going to look for my Chinese tailor. I owe him \$160."

The Japanese is the only foreigner who can indulge in a misdemeanour with impunity, as in his case drunkenness and an assault on the police are only punished by a severe caution and perhaps \$1 fine.

A Japanese once explained to me that the reason of their leniency is because they are such



"THE DOOR IS WIDE OPEN, BUT IT IS SO SMALL THAT ONLY A JAP CAN PASS IN."

a kind-hearted race that they cannot bear to see anyone suffer, but I feel sure he was only referring to his own race, as in spite of the fact that a Jap goes practically unpunished for assault here, even if committed on the police whilst on duty, if a foreigner in Japan hits a Japanese, the punishment is invariably imprisonment without the option of a fine, and a long imprisonment at that.

This is on a par with the open-door policy as applied to their recently annexed territory ; the door is wide open, but it is so small that only a Jap can pass in.

Not that I have a word to say against the Japs, for nothing could be farther from my intention, but they do love themselves with such an all-absorbing passion that they have no sentiment to spare for other races.

I will bear in mind what you say about saving money, so soon as I get any material to work with ; meantime, if you have a couple of racing saddles to spare, with weight cloths, please send them along.

Having only just time to catch the mail, I must now conclude, and, with love and duty to mother and all at home, subscribe myself,

Your dutiful son,

JIM.

No. IV

79, BUBBLING WELL CRESCENT, SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

You will notice that I have left Mrs. Timm's Boarding Establishment. I could hardly do otherwise, for she was extremely rude to me on Friday evening at dinner, just because I told the "boy" to serve my soup after the fruit, in a finger bowl. This at twelve pounds sterling a month with extras. Oh, shades of the Cecil and Savoy! Gastronomic memories of the Berkley and Prince's bring tears of useless longing to my eyes, till I can barely see to capture the elusive haricot bean which is daily fed to me because it is safe. And yet the variety of foods offered to and consumed by such as are acclimatized is positively bewildering, for one sees the "old hands," whose stomachs are presumably too far gone to be capable of revolt, eating sauerkraut, raw meat, frogs, and canned snails.

The choice of liquids is limitless. I was intro-

duced to a man yesterday who, in a moment of expansion, told me that the doctor had ordered him off wine, whisky, and beer. In reply to my solicitous inquiry as to whether the abstinence affected his health adversely, he smilingly informed me that he never felt better in his life ; which happy state of affairs he attributed to vodka, schnapps, and absinthe, none of which his medical man had even mentioned.

The local Health Office issues a printed set of rules—which deserve far more attention than they receive—aimed at the prevention of such diseases as are contracted through the digestive tract—*nudis verbis*, to prevent your swallowing live germs in food or liquids. Admonition is directed principally toward cleanliness, and advice is given to avoid eating or drinking anything that has not been recently cooked or otherwise sterilized.

The latter advice is generally followed, especially by the proprietors of boarding-houses and hotels, in many of which one is offered food that has been cooked half a dozen times, without taking the curry into account at all.

There is still an apparently insurmountable difficulty in the way of cleanliness, however, and that is the regrettable fact that one is not—in the present state of the law—allowed to boil or



THE COOK.

otherwise sterilize the cook ; who, judging from a passing glimpse I had of ours, is in far greater need of the process than is the food. Of course, one can show the cook any amount of new ways of cooking, but, left to his own initiative, his menu will follow an orderly and changeless round. It is only by changing one's hotel, boarding-house, or restaurant that one achieves variety. The cook at the Shanghai Club had, for many years, included " roast beef and Yorkshire pudding " amongst his dishes. One day he was told to change this to roast beef and horseradish sauce, but, although forced to make the change, his innate conservatism prompted him to name the dish in the menu " Roast Beef and Horseradishire Sauce."

Chinese methods of farming and feeding animals, or rather, letting animals feed, are so, let us say, primitive that many residents grow their own vegetables and keep their own poultry and pigs for hygienic reasons, but lose them when they are ready to eat, for Chinese reasons. When poultry is ready for the table the birds are invariably stolen, so that the owner has to buy in the market after all. His Chinese servants knew this would happen all along.

If one keeps a coolie to look after the fowls, they gradually " die." If the coolie happens



H. H. Taylor

IF ONE KEEPS A COOLIE TO LOOK AFTER THE FOWLS, THEY
GRADUALLY "DIE."

to be short of money, their death-rate assumes alarming proportions.

Another surprise in store for the poultry fancier is the astounding fact that a young, plump pullet can grow old—horribly old—during a single night. This tragedy occurs most frequently during dark nights, when one is out to dinner. A similar fate befell a handsome young cockerel of mine recently. I called the coolie, and pointing to the ancient, disreputable bird which stood blinking his weary old eyes at me, inquired in the vernacular “What thing?” which is the form generally used here by any one desiring an explanation. The coolie looked at me sadly, shook his head, sighed despondently, and replied—

“I think so he belong sick.”

Now, if that coolie had blushed, if he had looked away in shame even, a reply might be possible ; but when a man, whom you could no more punch than you could punch a woman, gives you an answer like that, with a look of conscious virtue and deep sympathy, what can you do? There is only one thing to do, of course, and that is to give up keeping fowls—as I did.

Keeping pigs is also an expensive process, because the coolie's family has greater need of

the pig's food and far better chance of getting it than the animals themselves.

I know a man who kept four pigs for nearly ten days, but three "died," and his wife made a pet of the one remaining because it used to follow her about like a dog. She did not know that this habit was acquired because the poor beast was hungry, so she tied a piece of blue ribbon round its neck and called it Maud, because it was always coming into the garden. Soon after Maud had a litter—of two. When the owner expressed surprise at their scant number, the coolie attributed her debility to the hot weather.

Naturally, you people at home will have several theories to advance with a view to improvement. You will wonder why one doesn't get rid of the coolie. The answer is simple. If one dismisses the coolie one has to engage another—and the new man is invariably worse. Again, one has ascertained and guarded against probably twenty-four methods of stealing practised by the old coolie, whereas the new servant will have twenty-four devices that are quite new to one ; and further, when one sends away a domestic here, a goodly proportion of one's belongings go with him. The articles chosen are such as are not in everyday use. He will take your winter underclothes in the summer,

your summer garments in the winter, and so on.

The habit of dismissing servants has another danger in the fact that once dismissed your "boy" disappears entirely, but the loss of everything afterwards stolen is debited to his account by the other servants, who take this opportunity of stealing more and charging the crime to the absent one.

A question of general importance now engaging our attention is: What is to be the effect of the abolition of public opium-smoking? The only way we can judge as to whether the curse is undergoing abatement is by keeping a tally of the amount consumed both in public and private, especially the latter; then, when results are known, we can decide as to whether we are having our Indian leg pulled.

There can be no doubt that the prohibition is being seriously taken in hand, and is to some extent effective, so far as Indian opium is concerned. This points to two conclusions—firstly, that China *can* reform, and secondly, that she will—in every case where foreigners are exploiting her vices or corrupt practices for their own benefit.

Where the official classes are gathering the loot, to say nothing of that cogent individual

the Chief Eunuch, the opposition to reform is so intricately interwoven through the entire body politic that the threads must be withdrawn one by one.

The worst aspect of the affair, however, is that when these threads are withdrawn there will remain only the place where the fabric used to be.

There is still another interesting phase of the "reduction" in opium-growing of which you will, in all probability, not have heard, which is as follows : Only about one farmer in a hundred is an opium farmer. The Government introduced a rule that no farmer is allowed, from a certain date, to grow more than 10 per cent. opium on his land. The wily opium farmer, however, is not downcast ; he simply arranges with nine other farmers, who never before grew opium in their lives, to give him 10 per cent. of their land for the cultivation of the poppy, whilst he, in return, grows a corresponding patch of beans on his own farm in exchange.

The opium thus grown is sent down country in the following manner. There are, as you may know, three kinds of beans grown largely in the opium districts, viz., yellow, red, and black. Opium used to be made up and transported in balls. Now, however, the opium farmer makes



THE WILY OPIUM FARMER.

it up into cakes of the same size and shape as a black bean cake, plasters it over with black beans, broken pieces, and dust, and lo ! there is a cake of opium passing through that defies detection from a black bean cake, and everybody is happy but the Indian opium exporter.

Moreover, the prohibition has been the cause of several riots—rioting being the Chinese method of voting against a measure of which they do not approve. It is a ballot by bamboo, or referendum by rifle. Immediately popular dissatisfaction manifests itself, there appear the professional thieves and looters, who live by robbery alone. These men, working in gangs, inflame the people by violent speeches. Immediately law and order are deposed they carry out their prearranged plan of looting the most valuable goods in the district, leaving the rioters to be shot or captured as chance may decide. Long before serious danger threatens, however, these pests are out of the danger-zone with their loot and are laying their plans for further rapine.

Nothing could give the professional plunderer a better weapon to stir up a conflict with authority than the Opium Edict. Both the farmers, who are thus deprived of an immensely profitable crop, and the smokers, whose craving remains unsatisfied—being ignorant and desper-

ate—are not only willing but anxious to seize any violent means the adoption of which shows promise of enabling them to resume the vicious habit.

In the case of one riot which recently arose owing to the prohibition of opium-growing, the local magistrate sent his runners to a certain farm with instructions to destroy the crop. Immediately they had succeeded in their objective the farmer collected some of his sporting friends and destroyed the runners, after which the avengers advanced on the Yamen and set about the task of destroying the magistrate also.

This official thereupon crawled under the bed and sent a message out to the effect that if it was opium that they wished to grow, he, personally, would be the very last person in the world to put the least obstruction in the way of that profitable and most excellent industry; further explaining that he had destroyed the crop because he was under the impression that the farmer wished it to be destroyed, and had only sent the runners to lend a hand, or words to that effect.

I do not profess to know the exact circumstances of this particular case, but should have liked an opportunity of laying a small bet that if that farmer had paid the runners a few dollars

there would have been no destruction of the crop and no riot.

Investigators can, by travelling along the railways, convince themselves that poppy cultivation has practically ceased—along the railways. Let them investigate along unbeaten tracks, however, and they will alter their opinions, and probably find an explanation of the enormous supply of opium that lies stored in Shanghai alone even now.

One effect of the new regulations is that the coolie class is indulging in smoking cheap cigarettes in continually increasing quantities, and as these cigarettes, when alight, smell like somebody standing too close to the fire, I am of opinion that they cannot be considered as a healthy substitute.

The thermometer registered 102 degrees in the Hongkew Police Station last week (which is true, because the police say so), and this sultry weather makes it very difficult for the ladies to decide how to dress.

Some of them perspire and some of them chance it.

I do not know if the hot weather brings them out more than the cold, but one certainly sees more of them in the summer.

One lady I met last night was intermittently

attired in an X-ray costume of such heroic daring that I was rendered so nervous as to be unable to talk rationally, with the result that once in my confusion I fell over a chair. She laughed so heartily at my accident that something gave way. What it was, I do not know, as I fled in terror directly I heard it go—inexcusably rude of me, I know, but then, what could I do? For aught I knew to the contrary it might have been even more rude to stay !

I note your remarks about joining a Club for social intercourse, but there is not one suitable ; the nearest thing of the kind being the Shanghai Club, to which all the taipans belong, which renders it undesirable, as I don't care about mixing with taipans ; they get on my nerves.

However, I was forgetting : you do not know what a taipan is. A taipan, let me explain, is a red-faced man (the redder the face, the taipanner the taipan) who has either sufficient brains or bluff to make others work for him and yet retain the *kudos* and the bulk of the spoil himself. He is invariably "in with the Chinese," and generally has a peculiar habit of pressing the thumb of the right hand against the index finger, which seems to be a secret sign, though I have not yet discovered what it means.

In short, taipan is *lingua franca* for "head of the firm."

I do not contend for one moment, that the fact of a man having a red face means that he has led a fiery life ; for the rosy tint may be acquired by exposure to the sun and wind, or may be caused by a bad digestion. I merely comment on the remarkable fact that all taipans are red-faced men, and one can approximately assess their individual incomes by the shade. Neither has this facial colour scheme any connection with blushing, for taipans never blush, even when they rise at an annual meeting of shareholders for the fifth time and explain that the glorious prospects to which they drew attention at every previous meeting require pointing out yet once again, because they have receded so far into the dim distance that shareholders with ordinary eyesight cannot make them out at all.

To revert to the subject of social clubs, however, Shanghai is well provided. So far I have discovered the Masonic Club, open only to the members of that mysterious brotherhood whose ambition would appear to be passing through arches ; the Junior Club, German Club, American Club, French Club, Italian Club, Portuguese Club, Country Club—which latter is

run by masculine women and paid for by nice men with pink cheeks and long, silky eye-lashes—and finally the Ward Road Athletic and Social Club, commonly known as the “Spartans.”

The last-named has, however, died an heroic death, owing to the fact that the members could not retain the services of either a medical man or a committee for a longer period than one week. It appears that one of their regulations was to the effect that any member must be prepared to get up and box four rounds at any hour during the night. If it was decided that a certain member was becoming slack, or soft, and not taking sufficient exercise, the committee would advance on his house in a body at about 3 a.m. with a set of boxing gloves, turn him out of bed, clear the room, and insist upon his doing his duty for the sake of his health and the reputation of the club.

Everything ran smoothly till the committee visited a certain member who had changed his room without notifying the secretary. The new tenant was a six-foot Irishman, who, as luck would have it, had just sought repose after a somewhat wild evening; and, although he appeared to be quite unacquainted with either the rules or the art of boxing, the way he

could handle a footbath was a revelation which so deeply impressed the visitors that the Club could never again get a committee to serve.

As it is getting late, I must now conclude, with love to all from

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. V

79, BUBBLING WELL CRESCENT, SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

Since writing you last week, the "harem" skirt has made its comic, baggy appearance in Shanghai. People tell me that it will not become a popular fashion, but personally I incline to the belief that women who have legs which a cattle-dealer would describe as "beef to the heel" will fight for its retention with the hysterical courage born of despair.

The average woman, however, whose symmetrical limbs are the chief, if not the only relief to the dismal prospect of a muddy city street on a rainy day, will, I hope and trust, dismiss the horrible thing to the housekeeper's department with the curt command "Dusters."

Moreover, if this sartorial buffoonery is not quickly suppressed such husbands as are of a selfish or nepotic disposition will insist upon its permanent retention ; a calamity that will be

deeply deplored by the large class of bachelors, and also the still larger class who would like to be.

If women must have novelty in dress, or feel dissatisfied with the natural shape of their bodies, why not design a sensible costume? This would be breaking new ground, as the attempt has never been made since the days of ancient Greece ; but the raiment must stimulate man's idealistic imagination, not smother it in the forbidding folds of a "harem" skirt.

As a direct result of the first appearance of the dress here, two policemen went to hospital, one fainted (he was Scotch), and the other ruptured a blood-vessel laughing (he was Irish).

I have frequently wondered why women are ridiculed for spending so much time and thought upon dress. To one who has seen and appreciated the delightful attraction of a *chic* bathing costume at Ostend, and also groaned in spirit at a pretty girl, who otherwise appeared sane, inviting the unspeakable anathemas of the artistic temperament by offending nature in a blue serge, shapeless garment trimmed with washed-out yellow braid, this attitude is inexplicable.

Personally, I would, as a married man, cheerfully spend half my income, should such expenditure be necessary, in order to avoid the

unutterable horror of a wife clothed in flannelette ; for the only good point about this abominable, clammy, soul-destroying material appears to consist in its highly inflammable character. Who invented the stuff I know not. Perhaps its inventor has benefited the human race, because practically everybody you meet seems to consider it his or her duty to go about clothed—except the women who wear openwork—and the stuff is cheap ; but the villain who dyes the greater part of it a deep, bilious, disgusting pink, like cheap sweets, and sells it to innocent women who don't know any better, should be placed under restraint and forced to work for the State for seven years.

You asked me in your last letter some questions about the Society of the place. Now, I must impress upon you the fact that "society," like morals and whisky, is a vague, unstable term, used with totally different meanings, which vary with the latitude and longitude ; and you, being so fortunate as to belong to our family, will have the requisite intelligence to realize this. Wherefore I must tell you, that upon receipt of your letter I set forth to ascertain to which species Shanghai Society belongs.

Following the advice of the Fashionable Intelligence Editor of the local society paper,

I made direct for the Avenue Paul Brunat, which, by the way, is the residential district where such local architects as are of a humorous temperament erect brick and stone jokes in proof of the fact, and then drive their friends out that way in order to enjoy a good laugh.

In this architectural wonderland lives by far the better half of a prominent taipan, with whom I am slightly acquainted; that is to say, as slightly as I have been able to manage. As this lady is reputed to be a leader of fashion, I decided to interview her upon the subject of Society.

After awaiting the departure of two ladies who were petitioning for an increase of salary for their respective husbands, I was shown in, and upon explaining my business was allowed to sit on a hassock at her feet and listen.

I could at once see she was a Society lady, because she used paint, and yet was quite respectable, or very, very nearly so.

She informed me that her husband was out, and after tendering my congratulations on that fortunate happening, we proceeded to discuss the object of my visit.

In effect, she explained that Society proper in Shanghai consisted of herself and another lady, who had gone home for the hot weather.

"But the Bubbling Well people?" I interjected.

Her beautifully executed eyebrows soared upward like the wings of a bird, and settled in her hair.

"Of course, there are people who, I am given to understand, live in the Bubbling Well district, but really, you know—er—may I give you another cup of tea?"

Hastily apologizing for this *gaucherie*, I left to procure further knowledge.

In the course of five days I learned of sixty-four other cliques, mainly consisting of one family, or at most two, not one of whom "knows" the others officially.

The only conclusion the griffin can reach in these circumstances is, that it is very difficult to get into Society in Shanghai because there isn't any; and that anybody with social ambitions must make his or her own. Judging from what I saw of it, it would be a far more interesting occupation to keep rabbits.

In the line of amusements we are fortunate in the possession of a very comfortable and well-designed theatre, at which one or two touring companies show, as also do our own Amateur Dramatic Club and the French A.D.C.

The amateurs put up a really excellent per-

formance, and the town is under a deep obligation to these painstaking and really clever people. The "small part" actors also deserve gratitude which is frequently reserved only for the leads. A man who has to take the part of the villagers, and whose opportunity for achieving a histrionic triumph consists in the line "Three cheers for the squire ! 'Ooray ! 'Ooray ! 'Ooray !" is, in my opinion, little less than a hero.

We also have several kinematograph shows, which provide us with astigmatic representations of various small boys weeping over their mothers' graves, and refusing to be comforted even by depressing fathers with cotton-wool eyebrows, whose method of administering consolation to their leaking offspring consists in laying a hand on their bowed heads and sobbing as if indulging in a course of Mr. Sandow's exercises for development of the chest.

These films, which are described as containing a "heart interest," in actual fact merely hold a thousand candle-power lamp to the blue devils. As, however, all our flickergraph halls are fitted with a bar, the object of displaying these melancholy films may be to drive the audience to drink at thirty cents per drink ; for I presume there are many more who, like myself, cannot bear them, and in consequence seek refuge in a

ninety-cent doze on those occasions when we are doing escort duty.

Why morbid people who can attend, free of cost, a real funeral in the open air, and one which does not stagger about on a quivering churchyard, should visit a kinematograph show where the proprietors exhibit these depressing films I fail to understand.

Science is undoubtedly making great strides, but treads on art at every step.

And now there is talk of combining this debauch of deformity, this inelegant eyesore, with the scream-language of the gramophone.

When our pretty cousin of the future insists upon being taken to a "show" of this type, we shall be obliged to watch in profane silence whilst a palsied gentleman with the blind staggers makes love to a quaking maiden, and listen to his metallic, agonized yelp: "Phyllis! Phyllis! O-o-o-er, Phyllis, I lo-o-ove you." In his excited efforts to grave his "lines" deep in the receiving record the "lo-ove" will sound like the wail of a lost soul at 33° Fahr. on a wet night. That is, unless some one amongst the audience who is artistically inclined sneaks round behind and brains the operator with a chair, trusting to the great provocation to weigh with the jury, or to the plea—as I read somewhere

that a prisoner recently did plead, under similar circumstances—that he was merely exterminating vermin.

The Chinese have recently erected a semi-foreign theatre. A few days ago I attended one of the performances, which ran from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. I ran at 10 p.m. As you are aware, the old Chinese theatrical performance was a very primitive affair—deficient in scenic effects. Not so the new development. As we entered, a storm at sea was being represented on a modern, well-lit stage. The waves were coolies on their hands and knees under a blue-green cloth. The bow of a battleship entered from the o.p. side, lit up by red fire. The magazine exploded (Chinese crackers). The crew seized lifebelts and jumped overboard, doing considerable execution amongst the “waves.” Enter another ship to the rescue. The Admiral who jumped from the sinking vessel wore a Field-Marshal’s hat and “slashed” coat and trousers of a material similar to that forming a gentleman’s sleeves in the days of Good Queen Bess. He rescued a foreign lady, dressed in a motor veil and a costume of bright pink and blue. The scene changes to a hospital, and coolies carry in the rescued. All, however, have in the meantime been arrested, possibly for attempted suicide, and the police who guard

them are armed with "Daisy" air-guns and dressed in a job-line of cricketing blazers and caps. A foreign ambassador with an enormous red nose is concerned in the plot somehow, and he wears a red sash over the shoulder, six medals, a frockcoat with gold epaulettes, a top-hat, and an ordinary elastic cricketing belt ! Of course, the Chinese are born actors, and the acting itself was perfect—but the costumes !!

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. VI

SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

The weather is still very hot here, and I am beginning to feel the effects of it, and, I fear, show them. Anyhow, my “run down” appearance has been noticed by a friend named Brown, who is the owner of a fine houseboat. In the kindness of his heart, he invited me to go away for a week-end in the country and recuperate.

Having accepted, four of us started away last Saturday to a place known as the Hills, accompanied by a dog, the kind they call a chow dog, which name the beast justified by smelling out and eating a three-pound joint of beef that we were keeping for Sunday tiffin.

These houseboats are large, roomy affairs, their clumsiness being amply compensated for by their comfort, and they are eminently suitable for the creek and river work for which they are con-

structed. They are propelled by sail and "yuloh."

To request me to describe a yuloh, however, is—like asking for a description of many other Chinese survivals that have never been introduced into Europe—setting me a task difficult to perform.

The method of using a yuloh is similar to that employed by fishermen to propel a small boat with one oar over the stern, known as sculling or "wangling"; but when one sees the oar one realizes that the Chinese mind is capable of the most recondite reasoning.

The yuloh is a long oar with about three feet of the handle bent down from the plane of the blade, which latter is feathered down from the centre ridge with one flange larger than the other. At the point of fulcrum is a little hollow or socket, made to receive a pin with a broad head like the round end of a bolt, and to the inboard end or handle of the yuloh is attached a line about four feet six inches long, which is fastened down to the deck.

The boatman rests the yuloh on the pin, grasps the line with one hand and the yuloh with the other, gives a peculiar swing to his body in order to concentrate practically all his force on the rope, which is now strained taut, and—Presto!

you are wriggling through the water at a surprising rate by means of a perfect system of applied mechanics that was in use probably many centuries before Noah went into the salvage business.

One should be very careful in arranging these houseboat trips, if ours was a characteristic example ; for soon after leaving Siccawei a drink was suggested, and the boy was called to open the bottles. Glasses were distributed, bottles of beer produced, and the order given to the boy "Makee open."

The boy looked uncomfortable.

"Makee open," we roared in chorus.

"Corkscrew no got," says the boy with a bland smile.

"How fashion no got?" screams Brown, with a catch in his voice.

"My no savvy," replies the boy indignantly ;
"master no talkee wantchee corkscrew."

Brown tries hard to think of a suitable remark, but there isn't one, so he becomes inarticulate.

"Never mind," exclaims some one, "give me some chow water."

"Chow water !" yells Brown.

"Chow water kong have makee break," replies the boy.

"How fashion makee break?" says Brown

quietly, with a glitter in his eye, edging toward the boy.

"My no savvy," comes the reply from the boy as he feels for the door, keeping his eye on Brown, "I think so coolie——"

Here Brown springs, but we catch him in mid-air and sit on him.

So soon as Brown regained his composure, we sat down to discuss the situation, and had just decided to make a corkscrew out of wire and sup off beer, sardines, raw eggs, and jam, when our ears were assailed by blood-curdling yells and screams that made me think we were being attacked by pirates.

When this deafening din was at its height, there came a splintering crash, and the bow of a native cargo-boat rammed through the window by which I was sitting and hit me in the back of the neck.

Through the opening thus made in the boat's side was now borne in upon the evening breeze the most searching, heartrending, and altogether astounding stench that I have ever been introduced to in any part of the world.

Rushing on deck, half dazed by the shouting and giddy from that poisonous smell, we found the laodah¹ of our houseboat and all the coolies

¹ Boatman in charge.

hanging on for dear life to a native boat loaded down with manure of a description that I must refrain from specifying.

"Let go!" shouts Brown frantically.

"Must pay five dollar," answers the laodah, "belong he fault."

"Cast off!" screams Brown hysterically through his handkerchief, "maskee ' five dollar, maskee every damthing; suppose you no go away from he chop chop, you makee die," and poised aloft a ten-foot boathook, with which I am convinced the laodah would have been brained, had he not at that moment released the cargo-boat, which drifted away in the darkness.

The air having cleared somewhat, we entered the cabin, but the stench would not go, even after we had made the boy wipe it off the walls and ceiling, where it had condensed.

Happening to look down, I discovered the cause—it was the dog; he had evidently jumped on board the cargo-boat during the confusion and missed his footing after getting on board. Brown wanted to have him washed, but we were desperate by this time, and I carefully and gingerly wrapped him up in a newspaper and threw him through the window. The horrible beast, however, returned during the night and

"Never mind."

slept on my shirt, which was hanging up on the floor.

Until after dawn I got no sleep, for just as I was dozing off for the first time, another terrific crash and bump threw me across the cabin.

"What thing, laodah?" says Brown in a voice of despair.

"Maskee," comes back the voice of the laodah; "have makee hit one small piece stone bridge."

Hoping to escape the mosquitoes, I now ascended to the roof, and lying down, was, I believe, about to drift off into slumber, when I was startled by a warning shout from the laodah, and sitting up suddenly, my head came into violent contact with the coping stone of a bridge. Had I lain still I should have escaped unhurt, but the laodah's caution made me sit up just in time to receive the full force of the impact.

Being more than half stunned, I embraced the stonework with both arms, while the houseboat glided from under me, the raised part at the back of the cabin scraping off in its passage two layers of skin from that part of my anatomy with which it came in contact.

After scrambling on to the bridge and extracting several splinters from my flesh, I had

to walk painfully along the bank over the sharp stones with my bare feet to regain the boat, in stepping on board of which I awakened Brown, who asked me why on earth I couldn't keep quiet and let people sleep, instead of wandering about the country looking for amusement at midnight.

I tried to reply, but the words stuck in my throat, so I returned to the cabin.

On arrival at our destination in the morning, the crew went ashore ; but being far too tired to do likewise ourselves, we slept soundly till midday, at which time I was awakened by Brown, who shook me and asked me what was the matter with my face.

"Face?" I enquired sleepily, "what face?"

"Yours," said Brown ; "it is all hanging down in lumps—that is, if it really *is* your face."

Upon looking in the glass I was horrified to find that my eyelids and cheeks had been so badly bitten by mosquitoes that I was quite unrecognizable, so much so, that when Smith woke up and I said good-morning to him, he answered : "Good-morning ! who the — are you?" and I was obliged to get Brown to introduce me again.

The return trip is more or less of a blank to me, which state of affairs happened in this

way. The stove smoked so abominably into the cabin that we were unable to cook anything, and as a consequence had to feed on the most weird mixtures, against which nature revolted in the form of indigestion and heartburn.

Brown, like the doddering idiot he undoubtedly is, suggested as an infallible cure the swallowing of the yolk of a raw egg floating in beer, great care being taken not to break the yolk. We had plenty of eggs and plenty of beer on board.

Personally, I found that I could swallow the beer, but experienced great difficulty with the egg, for in eight tries I only managed three, but was not going to be beaten by a mere egg, so I kept it up till I had consumed six, in spite of the fact that the feat seemed to get more and more difficult as time went on. I had lost all count of the beer and quite forgotten the heartburn.

The next thing I remember was arriving at the Bund on Monday morning, and being met by two friends on the way to the office. How spick and span and comfortable they looked ! whilst I was feeling as if God didn't love me any more, and my clothes were a misfit.

One asked me where the fight had occurred, and the other suggested that I should go direct

to the Isolation Hospital and await developments.

Seizing my clothes, I jammed them into my kitbag anyhow, the desire to hide being uppermost in my mind ; but as fate would have it, I met, during my journey to my rooms, I firmly believe, every single friend and acquaintance I have in Shanghai. Fortunately, few of them recognized me and the majority of people crossed over to the other side of the road as I approached and regarded me with pity and disgust.

Dr. Jackson says I may be able to go to the office again in two or three days, and as I have an appointment with him in ten minutes' time I must conclude this letter, with my duty to yourself and love to mother.

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. VII

YOKOHAMA,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

You will remember my telling you in my last letter that I had taken a houseboat trip to try to recover from a run-down appearance due to the heat. On my return to Shanghai the doctor ordered me to Japan as an antidote to the houseboat trip, which holiday, I told him, I really couldn't afford, but would make some sacrifices and go. I don't wish him to think I have enough money to be an invalid.

My friends advised me to try to find a companion for the journey, so I threw out some enquiries with this end in view, which only had the disastrous effect of bringing Brown round to see me, with the news that he was taking his two boys over to Yokohama for a holiday. These two olive-branches are aged respectively seven and nine, and have a reputation for devilment which is highly amusing—to hear about.

Brown knew that I had booked my passage, so escape was impossible.

We were timed to sail at 5.30 a.m. last Wednesday by the *Samshu Maru*, and the first signs of dawn found me at the N.Y.K. wharf, climbing the gangway.

Sitting on one of the hatchways surrounded by a pile of luggage was Jack, Brown's elder son, eating a horrible greasy, semi-transparent, green and yellow mass of bilious-looking material having a pink chop on it, which he informed me was some Chinese sweetstuff that he had found on the deck.

The appearance of the thing alone made me offer him twenty cents to throw it away. I wasn't feeling bright myself, and never do if I get up before the streets are properly aired—the idea of his actually eating it made me feel quite ill.

My efforts, however, were fruitless; for I discovered afterwards he had taken my twenty cents, thrown the sweetmeat in a place from which he subsequently retrieved it, and then bought sufficient to last him the trip with the money.

Leaving Jack well charged with ammunition for one of the most earnest and painstaking attacks of seasickness I have ever seen, I made for Brown's cabin.

I found the place in indescribable confusion and Brown's legs protruding from under the bottom bunk. On hearing me enter, he withdrew the rest of his body, bumped his head, swore, wiped his face, and asked me where Humphrey was.

Humphrey, I should explain, is Brown's younger boy (the name means "domestic peace"). Jones told me that "Hump," as he is generally called, is a judgment on Brown for marrying the prettiest girl in Shanghai.

Jones, I should explain, "also ran" for the present Mrs. Brown before Brown and she became engaged owing to his motor developing acute constipation of the petrol feed-pipe, whereby the pair of them spent the night seven miles out of town on the Rubicon Road, and only managed to get home at daylight, when Brown discovered, to his histrionically perfect surprise, that the petrol feed-tap had turned itself off.

But to resume. I congratulated Brown on losing Hump and asked him where Mrs. Brown was.

"Hetty is in bed," he answered.

"Not coming with us!" I exclaimed in dismay.

"No," answered Brown, "I am going to Japan for a pleasure trip."

"But the boys?" I exclaimed in astonishment; "who is going to see to them?"

"They are as good as gold with me," replied Brown proudly, "and besides, I have taken a bunk for you in here, so that if anything should happen, you can give me a hand."

"Oh!"

"You see, old chap, I am not afraid of them unless they are sick. You know what kids are—they eat anything, and I hear there is a typhoon outside, and I am not a good sailor myself, but I know you are."

"Ah!"

"Where are you off to?" enquired Brown anxiously.

"I'm going to try to find Hump," I said weakly; "and I may also try to get a transfer. I didn't know about the typhoon; perhaps after all it would be better to put off the trip till the weather is better."

My voice, however, was drowned by the steamer's deep-toned whistle, and when I gained the deck we were leaving the wharf.

Brown was now engaged in a frantic search for Hump, enquiries from the Japanese only eliciting a grin and a stare in most cases. He was, however, eventually discovered, and

"Make 'em."

"I can't."

"Why?"

"Oo-er," he replied, making the most repulsive faces.

"It's all very well for you to say oo-er," I answered; "remember it was you who got married, not I. It was you who brought the boys on the ship, and now, just because you have over-eaten yourself, you want to pile all your troubles on my shoulders. Brown, I am surprised at you, I really am."

"Take 'em," implored Brown, "just one minute; I only want to—hup," and with a gesture of despair he threw his overflowing offspring at me and staggered away.

Leaving Miss Snodgrass with the two results of Brown's susceptibility, I went in search of the stewardess.

This poor woman I discovered absolutely smothered in babies, all of whom had been evidently fed on sour milk for some time previous to sailing, and surrounded by a crowd of women all talking at once and most of them asking her why she didn't "do something," while she, poor soul, was wiping up babies two at a time and trying to look cheerful.

What her remuneration is I am unaware, but if she receives less than \$500 per month it is a disgrace to civilization.

Even while I was standing there, three ladies wanted to know their way to the doctor's cabin, one demanded some puppy biscuits, another wanted a new tube for a feeding-bottle, which the stewardess was to see was quite clean and didn't leak, because baby had wind already, poor mite; another required some special ink for a fountain pen, two called for castor oil, and one old lady was asking for an explanation of her carelessness in not looking after Tony, her Japanese spaniel, which, as anyone could see, hadn't had its nose wiped for hours, poor darling.

Seeing it was impossible to obtain assistance in this quarter, I went in search of Brown, and found the remains of him hanging over the rail.

"Come on, Brown," I said; "fetch your boys and take them to the cabin. You're all right."

"Am I?" and he turned on me a haggard face that would have melted the heart of a West End money-lender.

"Well, hurry up," I said, relenting, "and come as soon as you can."

" Make 'em."

" I can't."

" Why? "

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“ I am being as—hup—quick as I—oh—hup—ugh I—go to —— ! ” he gurgled.

I could see he was telling the truth, so had no option but to return to the boys and their fair companion.

Eventually I fixed Miss Snodgrass in her cabin, and Brown and the boys also in theirs, and went down to dinner.

Only three other passengers appeared : a green one, a white one, and a yellow one. The green one fell at the second course and the white one succumbed to the roast mutton. The yellow stayed well, but his manner was strange and his eye wild. His method was to take a mouthful and wait, with a thoughtful look in his eye, and then, if nothing happened, chew and wait again ; then, if all was still well, he would swallow, and after an interval for thought—rather expectant thought it seemed to me, reminding me of the look I once saw on the face of a man who accidentally swallowed a pipe stem—go through the process again.

But all difficulties have an end, and next day we were through the typhoon and running easier. Everyone sneaked back to meals, and the yellow passenger and I put on airs.

Jack and Hump were continually turning up when I was talking to Miss Snodgrass, as

children always will, till I threatened Brown that whenever I found them alone I would feed them with condensed milk, pickles, and jam. This plan worked splendidly.

On arrival at our destination, a dapper little Japanese in uniform, with a smile that overlapped his face, came up to Miss Snodgrass and myself and said :—

“ I am the plague.”

“ Which one? ” I enquired.

“ The cholera plague,” he replied, waving his arm comprehensively toward the town.

“ Go and see Brown,” I answered ; at which he smiled more than he conveniently could, drew in his breath with a hissing sound, and handed me a paper, which read : “ Infected Port Regulations—Identification Card,” which proceeded to ask who you were, age, colour of eyes, colour of hair (if any), whether married ; if so, how many children, and if not, why, &c., in seemingly endless array.

Miss Snodgrass kept the card covered whilst she filled it in.

So did I.

No sooner had we satisfied the plague than up popped another row of teeth, which said :—

“ I am the police.”

“ Go and see Brown, No. 7,” I whispered

with an air of great mystery ; and this time my strategy worked, for I saw him no more, but I am prepared to swear Brown did.

However, we eventually arrived without accident, except that Hump fell down an ash-shoot when looking for crickets, whilst Jack wedged his head firmly in a small inside port-hole and had to be oiled before he could be withdrawn. To make matters worse, while he was firmly fixed by the head, one of the Chinese passengers stole his boots.

Japan is a beautiful country for a tourist having money to spend with a lavish hand. It is the yellow New Jerusalem in a kimono, but possesses few charms for a business man. If even an American drummer visits the country he is fortunate to get away with the clothes he brought with him, and every port is crawling with touts.

The Japanese want to do all the business in the world themselves—for themselves.

With your politically stage-managed impressions of its inhabitants you may consider that I am exaggerating—a charge to which I plead guilty in many cases, but not in this.

If you are still unconvinced, ask any foreign business man quartered in the country who is not selling Japanese produce abroad ; but you

must do so at once, for in the course of a few years there will be none to ask.

You may make room for a Jap in your own country, and he will take his hat off to you and smile till he could whisper in his own ear ; but in his native land he spreads his elbows out till there is no room for you, and when you politely protest he shakes his head and doesn't understand.

You are not permitted to buy land in Japan, but if you marry a Japanese woman you may pay for some and register it in her name. This is a concession in your favour—typical in design.

Everything the Japanese buy abroad is bought as a pattern, from ships to beer. When the Japanese have got the "hang" of an article, they send some business men to have a look round the factory where it was made. Not that any one can justly blame them, for they, like every other commercial nation, are out for trade ; but what is to be said for the home manufacturers who give information to a people who give nothing in return but smiles, samples, and simulated simplicity?

Yet the country itself is a pure delight. I stayed at an hotel built of paper pasted on the framework of a "set piece" such as we used

to see at "Brock's Benefit" at the Crystal Palace in the days when I had to reach up to take your hand, and you used to make knots in the elastic with which my sailor hat was kept in place. In this kindergarten hostelry I saw no furniture that would have looked out of place in a 'doll's house'; and you take your food on the mat, as it were. The only thing that reminded me of Europe was the bill; yet I have never been overcharged with less annoyance to myself; but perhaps this can be accounted for by the fact that the perfectly charming proprietress, in saying "sayonara" (goodbye), begged me most earnestly to come back soon. At that time the suspicion had not eaten as a canker into my complacency that I was paying enough to keep the proprietress and staff for months, and yet I would cheerfully do it again, because they belong to the beautiful things of life.

As I approached the hotel I heard sounds of scurrying, then the slap, slap of Japanese slippers as three girls shot out of the interior on to the doorstep, took a rapid survey of me, and then bowed their flower-bedecked heads with a servility that made me feel uncomfortable—under the circumstances. They were all charming, they bubbled with merriment, and dimpled with laughter. Each wore a brilliantly

coloured kimono traced in bold yet successful designs. All were pretty.

The novelty of the situation is added to by the fact that one has to take one's boots off, squat on the floor, and clap one's hands instead of ringing the bell, though to be sure little clapping was necessary in my case, for there was an almond eye at a slit in the paper door watching to see that I wanted for nothing.

After a really excellent dinner and a bottle of claret with a mark I never expected to see in Japan, and that must have been a pure accident, I decided to go for a walk, and passed out the back way. I had proceeded only a couple of yards in the dusk, however, when I fell over something which, upon investigation, I discovered to be one of the waitresses having a bath in a little wooden tub.

She smiled at me very pleasantly and inquired whether my dinner had been "all ri." Having reassured her upon this point, I apologised for having startled her and prepared to resume my walk.

"What you mean, startled?" she inquired, as she went on soaping her toes.

"Frightened you," I explained.

"Oh, that all ri!" she assured me. "I not frightened"—and, after bidding her good-night,

just to show her that I wasn't frightened either, I left her smiling at me over the top of the tub in the moonlight, an opalescent idyll in soap and water.

In Tokio the traveller would—at first glance—assume that he had arrived at a British port. Signboards in English are displayed broadcast. Over every door is a name in English letters. Every other man one meets is wearing a top-hat and frock-coat—but what a top-hat and what a frock-coat! Ask one of these gentlemen the way to the post-office in English, however, and he smiles broadly at your ignorance of his language—for not one word of yours does he know.

So to bed at last in peace, as it is getting very late, goes—

Your affectionate son,

JIM.



“BUT WHAT A TOP-HAT AND WHAT A FROCK-COAT !”

No. VIII

SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

I returned from Japan last night, and have decided to stay quietly in Shanghai and recuperate after my holiday. How awfully fatiguing holidays are !

In reply to your query as to the nature of the businesses in Shanghai, I am afraid you ask a question beyond my power to answer, but, with all due deference, I should say that the wharf and godown business is of the greatest importance here.

I cannot get a satisfactory explanation of how the term "godown" originated, and why it was substituted for warehouse, but understand that the word "godown" is used because, if one buys shares in a company owning godowns, the value will immediately go down.

In substantiation of this contention, I must admit I have not so far heard of a wharf and go-up company in the East.

Then there is the piece goods trade, which deals in piece goods, or rather did, piece goods being cotton stuff that the natives buy to patch their clothes with ; hence the name. Just now, however, the natives have not enough money to buy patches with, and not enough clothes to attach patches to, even if they had, so they go about still better ventilated than before. Meantime, the piece goods merchant cuts down his wife's dress allowance, reduces the number of his midday cocktails to three, and tells the shroffs to call again.

" Shroff " is the name applied to the employé of every local firm whose duty it is to collect money, and in view of the prevailing system of credit, the shroff's lot is not a happy one in hard times ; for a man's position here is not ruled so much by what he can earn as by what he can owe and still remain at large.

Getting into debt always requires a certain amount of genius, but it is only the really talented man who can get out of debt again.

Generally speaking there is not much to fear in lending a man money if he is settled down here, because if a man is dishonest he may as well book his passage at once. He can do no business after his first crooked deal.

THE MAIL
SUBSCRIPTION



H. Hayter

"WHOSE DUTY IT IS TO COLLECT MONEY."

There are exceptions to every rule, of course. We keep ours in the municipal gaol.

It is not the amount a man owes but the way he owes it, that is of vital importance, and in this connection it is as well to bear in mind that poverty is no crime : it is only the horrible punishments with which poverty is visited that gave rise to so ridiculous an idea.

I should say insurance ranks next and is by far the most profitable ; but that is principally because the methods of doing business are different here, and the insured is made to pay his premiums promptly, but should he be so wicked, so criminally negligent, as to have a fire, he is arrested immediately. In his frantic efforts to escape the meshes of the law, which of course, if a native, he doesn't understand, he usually overlooks his claim, but should the law prove powerless to put him out of harm's way, and he timidly suggests compensation, the manager has only to frown heavily and he runs away and hides himself.

The fire insurance companies have also formed an association, thus doing away with competition and dictating their own terms—take it or leave it ! If one wants insurance, one must be very polite and do as one is told ; run

one's business as the Association wishes, and then they will give the matter their consideration.

What is required is an Insurers' Association, or combine, of all big honges, wharves, &c., which would act exclusively in concert in all matters relating to insurance. I think this would be the only way to make the scornful smile of the Association fade away and gradually die.

In common fairness, however, it must be admitted that the Chinaman's last hope when he is on the verge of bankruptcy is a fire. He considers that the "foreign devil" has made him a bet of the face value of his policy that he can neither have a fire by accident nor set fire to his house himself without being found out.

In one case that came to my notice recently, a Chinaman actually set fire to his house, and the dead body of his own child was found inside by the firemen. A doctor's examination of the corpse disclosed the fact that the child had *been dead two days*.

Our Fire Brigade is composed entirely of volunteers, which speaks well for the public spirit of its members. They are, moreover, just as efficient as any brigade in the world.

Stockbroking is also carried on, but the methods of business are different from those

adopted in and around Capel Court. The fluctuations of the market are very wide. It frequently happens that one goes to bed wondering what make of car to buy, and at tiffin next day is calculating how much one's furniture will fetch under the hammer.

There is, of course, the usual speculative description of business, such as the Watch Club. One of this type started here some months ago, and its members, I feel sure, never did so much watching before in their lives. Some of them are still at it.

A Watch Club, as you are doubtless aware, is an amalgamation of members in which forty mugs subscribe \$1 per week on the chance of winning an amalgam watch that ticks and keeps sufficiently good time for the members to know when the payments are due. The promoter conducted the concern well till it got rather too big for him to handle alone, when, as was to be expected, as he was an expert watcher himself, and was using his ears also, he heard something crack and stood from under. But this precaution on his part was futile, as the other watchers got hold of him and pushed him underneath again, so that when the club fell it gave him a nasty jar—very nearly a stone jug. Anyhow, he came to the conclusion that he could watch more com-

fortably from a distance. His motto was "Watch and Prey."

There is also the missionary business. Of course, there are plenty of good missionaries who do not think it is a business or know they are parties to making it one ; and again there are others. For the sake of the former, one says little on the subject, like the sailor's parrot, but one wonders whether a carefully arranged commercial campaign in the guise of religion is a money-changer's within the meaning of the Act of God.

The businesses which suffer from the worst management, strange to say, are those of a semi-public character. In dealing with the officials connected with this class of concern, one is exposed, in the majority of cases, to the most arrogant, asinine discourtesy, puerile ignorance, or senile decrepitude.

Another class of business of great importance is that known as the Export and Import Merchants, a name applied to a concern which does not wish to appear out of place if seen selling Bibles, dice, or rifles, and which covers an enormous ground. On this ground can be discovered hard-bitten taipans who "engage" a compradore with "security" (beautiful word, security), buy stock (with his money), and then

engage market shroffs (with ditto, ditto) to sell the stock. Possibly as a result, we have here taipans who treat their employés with snubbing discourtesy upon the "keep them in their place" principle, which can be translated "keep them out of their place"—the method is one of self-defence: an indefensible, sandbag method of defence.

When I arrived as a griffin, of course, I had this in my mind, and selected my taipan with the greatest care, believing it better to have a good taipan than a good salary at the start; for, following this course of action, the griffin who is "exclusive" in his dealings with taipans acquires both, if he deserves to. And I do. One cannot be too particular where taipans are concerned.

The business man who is conspicuous by his absence is the bookmaker, and more's the pity, say I. If you can imagine a racecourse without a "ring"; shouting that stirs the blood, the sudden hush when "they're off," witty men with white hats and beefy faces, ever ready with jokes and repartee, I confess candidly I cannot. Anyhow, they tell me the race meetings here are tame, and this must be the reason; also one usually has to lay evens or odds on to bet on our totalizator.

Protection against fraud is an easy matter if licences are issued and deposit insisted upon, as you know. Not that there is any desire on the part of the authorities to suppress betting, for bookmaking is carried on, of course, but by a trust known as the Race Club (proprietary), which bets upon the "heads I win, tails you lose" principle at 10 per cent. commission, leaving you no chance of choosing "odds." Imagine one in ten of every dollar that is laid out in sweeps or bets of any description, where no other kind of betting may take place ! Of course the Club is quite above-board and its proprietary members are honourable sportsmen who would stoop to nothing unfair, but the point is, in my humble opinion, that they love themselves too much, and look on their own interests through the small end of the telescope, and on their duties to the racing public through the large end.

Let it be said on the other side that its profits can only be used by its voting members for the encouragement of racing amongst the members themselves.

Of course, if I do not like betting with them, I need not, but then I am precluded from betting with any one else ; and again, if I do not like to attend their meetings, I need not ; but then,

there is no other worth attending. I love racing under ordinary conditions, and these ten-percenters have taken up the best part of my recreation ground ; confound them !

Journalism, considered for the moment as a business, is a failure here ; the Shanghailanders haven't enough sense to buy what I write and too much to buy what the others write ; consequently there is no money in it.

Hello? Twelve o'clock—where's my night-cap? Here's to you, who have all the kindest thoughts of

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. X

SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

I have received a letter from mother asking me if we are well provided with churches here, and whether I have a good pastor to sit under. I am not at all sure that I know what the term "sit under" means (unless indeed it implies that one becomes "addled"), so I did not refer to it, but assured her that this being the headquarters of the missionary movement we have an unrivalled choice of spiritual nourishment, and to my personal knowledge at least one good sporting parson of the genuine type, who is himself a human being and thus capable of doing real good work.

An angelic, spiritual clergyman always reminds me of a rainbow—God's sign in the heavens—an object for awed admiration, but incapable of coming down to earth and lending a stranded sailor five dollars, or getting a half-nelson on him and helping to persuade him out of the



public-house and deposit him with a resounding bump upon the deck of his ship just before she sails.

Please reassure mother on this point yourself, and if she asks any further questions, answer them in a way to please her. I never could tell her any untruths myself, because she has such an altogether pathetic belief in me ; but I know that you do not mind going to any length to make her happy, and this is an opportunity of which I hope and trust you will take the fullest advantage.

Whilst upon the subject of churches, I find that I am living quite close to one having a peal of bells. There are eight of them, and four only are in tune. In running down the scale the last four give tongue in a succession of notes so fiendishly ingenious in their diabolical discord as to make one's nerves writhe as if having a tooth stopped.

Church bells, as you know, were originally used to scare away evil spirits. In this respect the peal in question would have been signally successful, for they are enough to scare any one—living, dead, or merely unconscious.

If the early Christians used relics of barbarism similar to these, one can almost picture an emperor of ancient Rome being aroused at

7 o'clock on Sunday morning, after a feast night, by a blood-curdling dissonance hammering at his already thumping brain, and giving orders in elaborately embroidered language for all the Christians who could be found to be burned without a moment's delay.

The Japanese men may no longer appear in the public gardens in their native evening dress. In this connection I must explain that out East everything is reversed, and the Japanese evening dress covers the upper part of the person, but exposes the lower more or less, according to the velocity of the wind. Now the Japs must wear foreign clothes on both ends, or Hoari and Hakama.

This official stipulation issued by the Japanese Consul, with unintentional candour admits that the Japanese does not class himself as a foreigner in his heart, for he uses the term "foreign clothes" in China as opposed to the Japanese ordinary dress, excepting only in the consular notification Hoari and Hakama, of which words I do not know the meaning, but trust for all our sakes that they are not the Japanese equivalents for a figleaf and a piece of string.

The notification says nothing about the Jap girls, but the authorities, knowing what thick

ankles they have, deem it unnecessary to touch upon this part of the affair.

So do I.

Shanghai is a wonderful place for the mixing together of nationals, and the results are extremely perplexing. As instance the case of a man here who is in debt, and his creditor cannot obtain satisfaction, because he does not know to which Consul to apply, the facts being as follows :—

The debtor's mother is an Austrian lady of rank, who married a Spaniard much more rank than herself, and had by him a son (the person in question), who appears to be the rankest of the family.

She successfully buried her husband last year, and came to Shanghai in the course of her travels, where she met a gentleman who is the son of an Indian watchman and a Chinese lady, and who has succeeded in business sufficiently well to make quite a handsome appearance ; so much so that she fell in love with him, or something, and married him.

Our debtor is the son of this lady by the first marriage, as I explained before, but now it appears there are further complications, for the fact has just come to light that the Spaniard, soon after the birth of our debtor, sued for

and obtained a divorce upon the ground that the boy was not his, a Russian being cited as co-respondent.

Now the question arises as to the nationality of this complicated individual, and I understand that the Court of Consuls has given orders that a drop of his blood is to be analysed.

We obviously need a Mixed Consul.

Yesterday evening I had one of the biggest surprises that I have ever experienced. On entering the vestibule of the Astor House Hotel, whom do you think I saw sitting demurely in a corner reading an evening paper? You could never guess ; it was Mrs. Waydon-Brinkley.

You remember Waydon-Brinkley, the broker, and his wife—that deeply religious woman who drank nothing but barley-water at dinner, and swallowed so much tea at other times that she couldn't sit still for more than half an hour at a time on account of her nerves or something?

She is on her way to Japan. Having been divorced by her husband, she is taking a tour round the world till the dust settles. The alimony seems to agree with her, for she is bright enough now.

I spent a very pleasant half-hour with her until, quite suddenly, it was borne in upon me that she was a divorcée ; and, as you are aware,

no other thing in life is so intolerable to a bachelor as a married woman who is so lost to all sense of duty as to make an idiot of herself—with somebody else.

Within five minutes of our meeting she was giving me a detailed account of Waydon-Brinkley's faults. I asked her about Smith—Smith, as you will recollect, was the correspondent. She then launched out upon a tirade against Smith, who, judging from her account, is a greater villain than Waydon-Brinkley.

It thereupon occurred to me that if both Waydon-Brinkley and Smith are villains in her eyes, I, who have always found them quite good fellows, must appear to her—when she got to know me—in the light of a thoroughpaced scoundrel, so I glanced at the clock and asked her if I could order anything for her. She assented very graciously, and when the "boy" arrived in response to my summons, I ordered some barley-water, bade her good-night, and left her.

You will be interested to hear that there are no workhouses here, because if a man has the misfortune to be short of money, he either borrows it, or signs a chit (I O U) for what he requires. When pay-day comes, if he is unable to pay

he orders more goods. This encourages the tradesman, and makes him think business is improving. Again, when one owes a heavy bill the shopkeeper is far more deferential. He is obliged to be. Then, when the day does come round when one can pay, the joy that shines in the radiant face of the tradesman gives one that pleasant glow of satisfaction that can only be attained by giving pleasure to others.

There are one or two men here who live upon their friends ; but they do it so nicely and so cheerily that being one of the victims is regarded almost as a privilege. Also there are more good-hearted men here to the square mile than anywhere else in the world.

A man who whines under adversity is a distressing complaint to be at large amongst any community, for his diseased mind is infectious, and with characteristic openhandedness he is always looking for some one with whom to share his troubles ; but his joys are hugged to his own bosom and cherished in secret and alone.

Personally, I do not mind accepting the generosity of the feminine of this type, because there is always a selfish pleasure in comforting women, and the process is rendered the more easy by your knowledge that their troubles are

not half as serious as your own ; for if a woman has received one of those cruel blows that stun, she remains dazed and silent—always silent.

Shanghai is a town with strong sporting proclivities, and nearly everybody rides. Ordinary ponies, not sufficiently fast for racing, cost about £8 or less, and their keep amounts to £2 10s. per month.

We have clubs devoted to the following sports : Rifle-shooting, revolver-shooting, clay pigeons, hockey, football, cricket, tennis, baseball, bowls, boxing, swimming, rowing, "yottin," motoring, badgers, draghounds, paper-hunting (cross-country, mounted), pony-racing, polo, golf, amateur acting and debating. The latter I class as a sport because I recently attended one of the sessions. All these clubs are prosperous and all are used, with the greatest good-fellowship, by men belonging to many different nations.

To a Britisher with insular ideas, thoroughly manured by music-hall patriotic songs and carefully edited school history-books, it is positively disturbing to find out what a really decent fellow a German, Frenchman, Italian, or indeed any foreigner, can be when you really get to know him, for the only fault one can find with most

of them here is that they are not British ; for which one cannot blame them, because they couldn't possibly help it. Moreover, it is unfair to throw this misfortune in their teeth.

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. X

SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

The questions you ask about the Chinese character in general I am quite unable to answer, although I have made enquiries ; for I find that it is only after years of patient study of the native character that the student fully realizes that he knows nothing whatever about his subject, and never will. It is only the more intelligent who are able to reach this advanced stage ; the remainder write books, from the conflicting opinions of which I have been obliged, with all due deference, to form this opinion.

How can I form an opinion of a race of human beings whose fundamental ideas I can never understand? Let me quote an example by way of explanation. Last Monday my "boy" altered the figures of a bill I usually give him to pay from \$11.00 to \$14.00. Seeing that all my belongings have been stolen with the exception of bare necessities, this is the only

method of robbing me still open to him, for his latest scheme of changing my good dollars that I lay upon my dressing-table at night, for brass ones has been detected.

Having proved the forgery against him, I lost my temper. I admit my fault, but I am only human, so I kicked him downstairs.

Presently I began to repent; I felt that I had been unfair—a bully—so finally, feeling thoroughly ashamed of myself, I rang the bell.

My boy entered reluctantly and fearfully, but on my presenting him with a dollar, with the idea of purchasing one shilling and ninepence worth of self-respect, his expression changed from sullen hate to rapture as he smilingly took the money and departed. Five minutes having elapsed, I heard a timid knock at the door, which opened about an inch to admit the tip of an apprehensive nose, followed by the remainder of what does duty for the face of our house-coolie.

“What do *you* want?” I enquired with irritation.

Advancing on tip-toe with an air of great mystery, he approached my chair, and bending down in exactly the opposite position to that usually assumed by one person in bowing to another, he remarked over his shoulder: “Sup-

pose you wanchee kick some more alle same, master, you pay my ninety cents can do ! ”

It is highly diverting, from an Eastern viewpoint, to read complaints from home upon the servant question ; let me assure you, you do not know what trouble in this respect really means.

One hears employers here openly confess that it is useless trying to prevent servants from stealing, and that one must “ allow ” a certain amount for “ squeeze.”

This is equivalent to saying, “ I am not to be worried about the Chinese servant ; he is going to rob me—very well, I give in, I am tired ”—and is one of the symptoms of Maskeeitis, which disease is explained later on in this letter.

All my beautiful socks that mother knitted at home have vanished, my shirts have disappeared, I am underpantless, singletless, and collarless, and now that there is nothing more to steal I am boyless.

“ Allow ” quotha ! I didn’t allow anything. I never had an opportunity. I was looked upon as a useful source of supply, and woke up one morning to discover that I had been inveigled into playing a game I didn’t understand, as a result of which I had been huffed.

My boy is now in search of another griffin,

but I have hopes—he is very deaf—that the trams may yet avenge me.

It is useless taking him to the police. They are, for one thing, too busy catching dogs at ten dollars apiece, and for another they must have clear proof.

I showed the inspector my chest of drawers (which are the only kind of drawers I have left), which he had to confess were clear enough, but didn't constitute proof. So, with tears of mortification, I pulled up my trousers and showed him I had only the top part of one sock attached to my boot-tops. I opened my waistcoat and convinced him I had only a dicky underneath, and a pair of detachable cuffs stuck in my coat-sleeves with paste. The only thing he could do for me, however, was to advise me to sleep in my trousers and coat and thus be sure of these, at least, if the worst happened.

How it is that the police do not receive instructions to issue licences to boys, giving their father's name and address, or that of a guarantor, such card to be endorsed by employers, I put down amongst the enormous number of things I do not know owing to my extreme griffinity. A heavy penalty could be imposed upon any one found "faking" these passes. The pass

system works well in Rhodesia, where it has been in use for years.

This would, of course, be only the first step, so much I realize ; but every one here decries any effort that fails to land one at the end of the journey before one starts, and when this preposterous method of attainment is found to be impracticable (except by the Chinese, who contrive to do everything in this manner), the usual comment is "Maskee."

"Maskee," let me explain, is Huangpoonese for "never mind," and its continual use produces an effect upon the foreigner similar to that attained by the Chinese as a result of the opium habit. It is called Maskeeitis.

Another affliction from which we suffer is the washman, who charges by the piece, irrespective of the description of garment. Consequently, if he tears your shirt into four pieces you pay for four and lose three other things, thus striking a balance. He also hires your clothes out to natives by arrangement with your boy, and his methods of washing are peculiar, as instance his mode of procedure in washing socks, which he does by putting four or five pairs on his feet at one time and going for a walk in the creek.

There is one phase of the Chinese character, however, which is becoming more noticeable every

day. This is their insistent demand for reform. It is as unmistakable as it is inspiring in the grandeur and boldness of its scope. One sees its unwearying, splendid persistence in the Imperial decrees. During the past few years decrees have been issued from the throne destroying and prohibiting everything in China that is abused and made a vehicle for illicit commissions, injustice, oppression, or "squeeze," the latter term being the local equivalent for extortion.

All these decrees end with the injunction "Let all tremble and obey." Whether any one trembles I am unaware, but it is obvious that no one obeys. Obedience is impossible, because if every institution that has been converted into a means of extortion were abolished there would be no institutions remaining.

The method of reform which at present prevails would appear to be as follows: There exist official censors whose duty it is to report any irregularities by memorial to the throne. Presuming these censors do their duty, there must be presented about eleven thousand memorials per diem. As comparatively few reach the throne, however, we can only assume that even censors are willing to "listen to reason."



HH

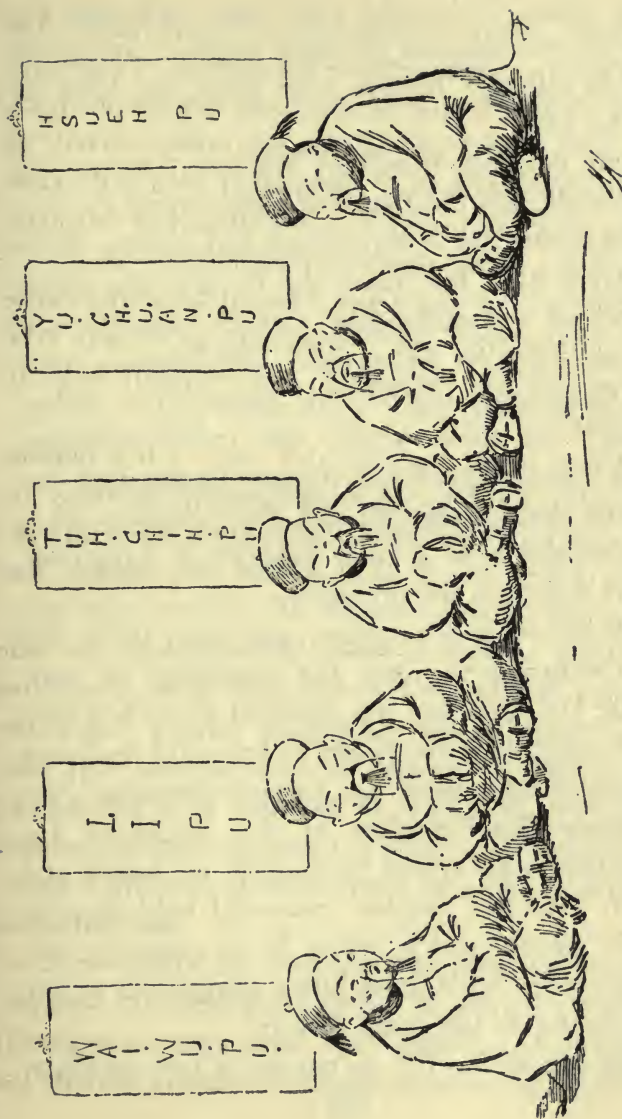
"THERE EXIST OFFICIAL CENSORS WILLING TO
LISTEN TO REASON."

These impeachments, or memorials, are handed from the throne to certain "boards," such as the Board of Finance, Board of Agriculture, Board of Communications, Board of Civil Appointments, Board of Uncivil Disappointments, Board of Rites, Board of Wrongs, &c., for investigation and report.

The use of the term "board" in this sense is delightfully apt nomenclature, where the subject is so inanimate and characteristically wooden.

These boards, presumably after a few months or years, send up recommendations in reply by means of another memorial. This memorial containing the recommendation then probably has to await its turn.

What happens next—if anything—no one appears to know, but, judging by results, after the lapse of say fifteen or twenty years the memorial is brought up for perusal "in due course," as they say at our War Office. In glancing through its faded pages the powers that be—officially referred to as US—may ascertain that one Tsu Bing Bung has been unmasked as an unmitigated scoundrel, and the sole cause of all the trouble. Tsu Bing Bung is sent for. Tremble and obey. The messenger subsequently returns to the presence and informs it that Tsu



THE USE OF THE TERM "BOARD" IN THIS SENSE IS DELIGHTFULLY APT NOMENCLATURE, WHERE THE SUBJECT IS SO INANIMATE AND CHARACTERISTICALLY WOODEN.

Bing Bung died eight years ago, and that his present address can be only vaguely hinted at by his intimate friends who knew the kind of life he led.

This flagrant breach of etiquette annoys US immensely, and the Board of Posthumous Punishments is ordered to investigate and report. After the lapse of a few years the B. of P.P. makes its report, recommending that the son be sent for and totally destroyed. Officialdom being now thoroughly roused, this memorial is rushed through in three years, the recommendation noted and approved and runners despatched, but the son doesn't tremble and obey, because he is the proprietor of a large laundry in Liverpool, and is living on the premises.

US is now in a quandary, and can't think who the Confucius to refer the damthing to next. Whilst US scratches the imperial head, however, the President of the Board of Imperial Audience Arrangers announces the Deputy-Assistant-Probationary-Vice-President of the Board of In-animation, who enters backwards on hands and knees. He has another memorial held daintily in his mouth, which, when he has spat it out, is discovered to contain bitter complaints of the same abuse in the same quarter.

The course for US to pursue is now obvious.

US hands the new memorial to same board as before for investigation and report. Interval. Receipt of memorial containing recommendations precisely similar to the previous one, with the exception that this time it is Wu Kung Mow that is the offender. Filed. Interval. Wu Kung Mow succumbs to senile decay. Interval. Wu is sent for (t. and o.), and so the reformation proceeds, slowly, I must admit, but proceed it does—which is distinct advance in a country where everything else proceeds backwards.

Personally, however, I am not one of those who scream for China's reformation—yet ; and my reason for saying this is that sixty years after she actually did reform, abolish likin (the tax on merchandise moving inland, which is enforced every few miles) and official corruption, and spread education—not, of course, the old type of education at present in vogue—she would be in a position to wipe the floor with any other four nations combined. Personally, I would infinitely prefer death to being ruled by a Chinaman.

Fortunately for the human race there is a natural law which prevents any people attaining a world-mastery until such nation has achieved a very high state of mental development. Num-

bers alone will not suffice. China is not yet qualified, but when she is—as indeed she will be some day—she should rule the world. Inas-



"THE OLD TYPE OF EDUCATION AT PRESENT IN VOGUE."

much, however, as development of intellect is universal, we have cause to hope that by the time China is in a position to rule, that natural

flower of intellect, universal peace, will be a feasibility, if not the obvious necessity that it is rapidly proving itself to be.

Any intelligent person who has seen the mutilated corpse of a soldier whose income was one shilling and threepence per diem before he gave his life for a cause the merits of which he had no opportunity to study, will feel the impossibility of continuity for any such horrible contravention of the axiom of the survival of the fittest. And the capacity for heroism combined with physical perfection is valued at present at one shilling and threepence a day in an age of money worship !

So the death-rattle of a "Tommy" is inaudible amongst the noisy congratulations showered upon the successful, businesslike army contractor.

Even so we all have our faults in the department of officialdom ; but China is undoubtedly reforming, and if we do not reform China, China will reform us within a measurable space of time. Again, if China reforms herself, and we develop along the lines of commercialism only, what a terrible price we shall have to pay for our lesson !

I am surprised at your expressing a doubt that our local mosquitoes can think ; the fact

is obvious to any observer. Their fiendish ingenuity is well exemplified by an incident that occurred last Tuesday. I had taken a lady in to dinner at a certain house here and was doing my poor best to entertain her. My efforts, I was pleased to observe, were meeting with some measure of success, when suddenly she gave a violent jump and a little gasp. Fearing she was ill, I anxiously inquired whether I could be of any assistance.

"I am afraid you cannot," she replied hastily, "it's a (ah—oooo, there it goes again) mosquito."

"Allow me," I insisted ; "I am a crack shot—hardly ever miss."

"This one is—ugh—out of range," she replied, with an impatience that was justified by my denseness.

With admirable presence of mind she then engaged the attention of the guests in her vicinity by relating a cycling adventure, and accompanied the recital with dramatic action, her imitation of a cyclist at full speed being particularly realistic.

Mosquitoes will have to get up very early in the morning to get the best of her.

Please go to Crook's in Regent Street and

send the biggest box of roses you can get to Gladys at Roehampton, in the name of your affectionate son,

JIM.

PS.—Will pay you next time I see you.

No. XI

SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

In answer to your inquiry as to the principal occupation of the Chinese peasant class, which, by the way, forms 90 per cent. of the population, I must inform you that their time is spent mainly in the vocation of agriculture, the chief productions therefrom being smells, graves, and rice, in the order named.

China is the country of the small landholder, for land, being very difficult to steal, is looked upon as the only really safe investment, the holdings being handed down from father to son. The farmer who succeeds in making his land smell more abominably than his neighbours is looked upon with respect, admiration, and envy by the surrounding population.

The amount of crops that the Chinese farmers can raise from one small piece of land is indeed surprising, but the amount of smell they can

produce from the same tiny piece of ground is positively incredible.

However, no Chinaman is considered to be in the highest sense worthy of admiration until he is dead. Although this would appear to the uninitiated to be hard to understand, as one gets to know the Chinese lower classes better, one realizes that this is the only sound and just way of regarding the matter.

Although I have no strong feelings on the subject, I must confess that I prefer them dead myself, but so intense is the native feeling on this matter that, if a fellow-countryman will only die, his friends and relatives show their gratitude with an energy that amounts in effect to worship.

The height of every Chinaman's ambition is consequently to become an ancestor, and he is never truly happy until he has succeeded in doing so—neither are his relatives and friends.

It is quite remarkable that in the smaller villages and country districts the population dress exclusively in rags. One never sees a well-dressed native who is not a high official ; the reason for this being that the villager is aware that any ostentation—and by ostentation in this connection is meant a coat with less than five patches—will arouse the cupidity of the

officials, which cupidity the said officials will not hesitate to gratify.

In Shanghai, however, where protection is assured, the wealthy Chinese go to the other extreme, and indulge in the most ostentatious display by means of adorned carriages and Australian horses—which latter are usually decorated with silver-mounted harness, ornate trappings, spavins, string-halt, and capped elbows—gaudily painted motor-cars and women, big cigars, and Boston garters.

Shanghai is the goal, the Mecca, of every light-fingered, useless, born-tired, work-shy native waster who cannot get a living in his native place because he is too well known and understood there to be trusted. The punishments that would inevitably overtake him should he remain in his native village are so severe, so necessary, so just, that the dread of them drives him to the protective care of the Shanghai Municipal Council, which does not bamboozle him even when he is caught stealing, but gives him a fairly comfortable, well-fed time in a gaol that is a palace compared to his home ; and which considers him innocent until he is definitely proved guilty—a form of legislation he would go hundreds of miles to obtain, as it suits his highly trained, inborn genius for evasion and



"THE MOST OSTENTATIOUS DISPLAY."

scientific lying infinitely better than the methods employed in the unconstrained administration of his own laws.

The Chinese authorities consider a Chinaman guilty until he is definitely proved innocent, probably because he usually is guilty. Even if he is innocent of the particular charge of the moment, he is most probably guilty of several other offences—or would be if he had the opportunity.

Justice being blind, they consider it only necessary to induce her to hit out in any direction, for whoever gets hurt is certain to deserve it either now or in the near future.

Moreover, justice, in China, is not only blind, but deaf to all sounds except the musical chink of dollars.

It is probably the paternal indulgence on the part of the Council, to which I have referred, that has earned that body the name of "City Fathers."

The Chinese, like women, are divided into two main divisions—good and bad ; and a further similarity is that you never can tell under which heading to place them until too late. A good Chinaman is like a good woman, a pearl of great price, just splendid, and not sufficiently common to be a drug in the market.

Yet another feminine characteristic of the race is, that if you afterwards recollect the exact moment from which you imagined you were commencing to get your own way (in consequence of which your vigilance relaxed), you can from that moment date the time they began to get theirs.

To deal with the good ones first, however, the Chinese gentleman and man of honour is such a very excellent individual that one is obliged to make allowances for the bad ones for his sake ; more especially as the faults of the bad ones are mostly the faults of a child.

The promise of a Chinese gentleman is inviolable, and infinitely to be preferred to our most complicated legal contract ; for the reason that once given there is no *desire* to break it ; the anxiety, nay, the whole object in life being to keep it to the letter ; whereas with some foreigners any loophole which can be opened by means of a law, ancient or modern, will at times be used with incredible meanness as a means of evading a promise accepted in good faith. A Chinese gentleman would no more plead that legal invitation to blackguardism, the Gaming Act, for instance, than would an English gentleman.

Unfortunately, this type of Chinaman is not

at the head of affairs, as a rule, either in diplomacy or business.

If it should ever be your good fortune to meet a Chinese gentleman and man of honour, you may know that you have met the highest type of gentility there is—from every point of view but the physical one.

Both classes are marvellously adaptable. It is just this adaptability of theirs that astonishes one beyond all else in China. There are Chinese gentlemen here who can make you as good a speech—in English, of course—as could the late Lord Salisbury, and an infinitely better one than Mr. Lloyd George or Mr. Roosevelt.

One sees the ubiquitous Chinaman looking after an electric-light plant, working the lime-light at the theatre, driving steam-rollers and the engines on the railways. He it is who makes ladies' costumes to measure, builds you a wharf or a brougham, and makes you a suite of furniture in the newest style from old kerosene cases. He sets up type to print your newspapers and books, despite the fact that the compositors who do the actual work cannot read or write a word of English, but pick out letters "alle same."

When he handles bamboo his ingenuity finds its widest scope. He eats it in the form of

bamboo shoots—which, by the way, are a most delicious vegetable ; drinks out of it shaped as a cup ; sleeps on it cut up into bamboo shavings, which make excellent, resilient stuffing for mattresses ; and is, finally, carried to his grave by means of bamboo poles.

Amongst a thousand and one articles he manufactures from it are mats, drain-pipes, baskets, hats, shoes, furniture, needles, houses, brushes, egg-beaters, ropes, and scaffold-poles. A Chinaman without his bamboo would be as helpless as a woman stranded on an iceberg without her clothes.

Of course, there is nothing remarkable in the fact that the Chinese can do wonderful things along their own particular lines, but there is something very extraordinary in the fact that after a lesson or two you can get a coolie to drive an electric tram or a motor-car for twenty dollars a month in wages and "find" himself. The only disadvantage to their adaptability lies in the fact that they persist in adapting your ideas of how a thing should be done to their own. If you tell a 'ricksha coolie to hurry up he goes slower ; not because he doubts that you are in a hurry, but because he is quite satisfied that hurrying is a stupid idea, and he refuses to be a party to

any such nonsense. Besides, he isn't in a hurry, and if you are, why in the name of all that's reasonable don't you get out and run yourself?

If you show him the right way to do anything foreign fashion, he obeys, goes home at night, thinks out another way, and follows his own method ever after. No amount of bad language, protest, or rage will move him; for his chief delight is to achieve a similar result to yours by a method entirely his own, and then look at you to see whether you are impressed. When you again explain the method you desire him to adopt, and demonstrate it, he says "yes," smiles, and continues as before.

This is not exactly obstinacy. He is sure his way is better; that is all; and if you are too obstinate to see it, the fault is not his.

When you ask him if he understands, he invariably says "yes," in order to save you a lot of useless explanation; for he knows quite well how he is going to do the job—he is going to do it his own way. He has the idea somewhere in his mind that he knows better than you do, and nothing will ever drive it out until he is killed either by the bursting of a boiler or the explosion of a match-factory. He is the only man alive who can smoke

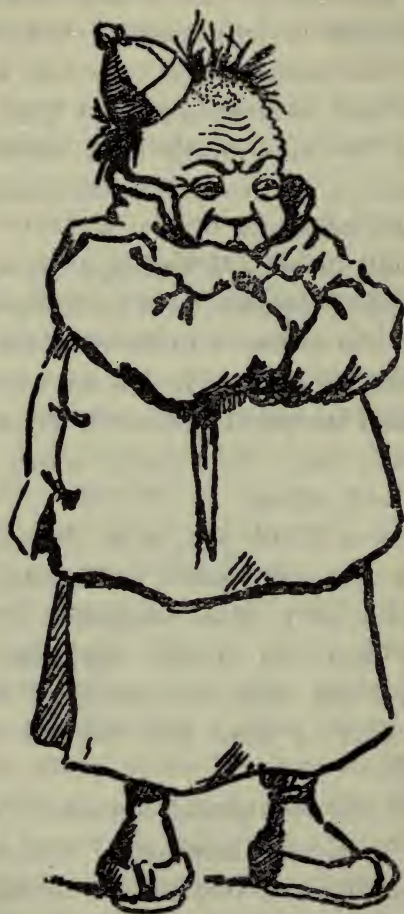
cigarettes in a gunpowder factory and only get blown up once every four or five years.

He navigates a junk (sailing vessel) with a sail about one hundred and fifty feet high, uses no ballast and no keel, and only gets drowned once in a lifetime—which is a mere nothing to a Chinaman, because there are plenty more—millions and millions.

He drives about in a carriage the springs of which are held together with ordinary wrapping string and the traces with an old bootlace, but never has an accident. He can use a condemned steam-launch for years and years by stuffing the cracks in her boiler with cotton-waste and mud tied down with string.

When he is ill he goes to a Chinese doctor, who doses him with dried centipedes, by the aid of which he is soon completely cured. If you gave him the proper medicine for his complaint, I am quite convinced he would die forthwith, just to show you that his way was the better.

He is usually very placid, but when thoroughly roused is a demon incarnate. Sometimes he becomes so annoyed that he will actually dance with rage, jumping both feet from the ground at the same time. Should he feel so insulted that his injury must be wiped out in blood, he makes



"WHEN THOROUGHLY ROUSED IS A
DEMON INCARNATE."

no attempt to destroy his enemy, but kills himself instead, in order to get his enemy into trouble. This latter mode of revenge has occurred frequently when the desire for revenge is greater than the love of life—and facts go to prove that, with the Chinese, this state of mind is not uncommon.

His main object in life is to avoid "losing face," though to look at him is to wonder why. Losing face actually means "blushing for shame." No Chinaman "loses face" by stealing, but by being found out; which is a point of resemblance between the Chinese and our great financiers.

No trick is too subtle for him. He mixes little clay balls with the soya beans that he sells, and you cannot detect them unless you are an expert. These imitation beans are offered for sale quite openly in the native shops situate in bean-growing districts. He introduces a special kind of white clay into his vegetable tallow. When live cattle were being sold to the Army, they were driven on to a scale and weighed as they stood. He pumped water into their stomachs with a force-pump to increase the weight.

His genius for deception and fraud is not content with the scope offered for its exercise

within the limits of the material world : his insatiable appetite for chicanery is therefore pandered to by the puerile deceits he practises upon that spirit world in which he implicitly believes, and takes into account from the cradle to the grave.

Thus he offers to the spirits of his dead relatives round discs of cardboard, stamped to resemble silver dollars and coated with silver paper ; paper sycee—that is, ingots of silver formerly used in currency ; and slices of real food pasted upon a bamboo framework so that the general appearance assumes the guise of a solid mass of appetizing eatables.

In his house-design he never allows one door to directly face another or a street to “ run ” in a straight line. The object of this is to prevent the passing through of devils—because devils can, in his opinion, only travel in a direct line, and are incapable of turning corners.

He also affixes mirrors over his door and sometimes on the cap of a male child, in order to “ reflect ” the evil spirit and cast him back from whence he came.

As you know, the Chinaman works all day and every day. For him there is no Sunday and no holiday until China New Year, when every shop is shut for about five days, the stock sealed up

in cabinets, debts paid in full (which is no small matter, since hardly a Chinaman trades with his own money), best clothes donned, and a regular orgy of gambling commenced. During this season one seldom sees one's servants.

Last China New Year, five of us were living in a "mess" in Haskell Road. We employed one coolie for cleaning up, one cook—who, in turn, as is Chinese custom, employed a boy to do his work—and each of us had a boy to look after our clothes, &c. We managed to get through the five days somehow, and upon resuming the even tenor of our way after the holidays I happened to go into the kitchen to see that everything had been cleaned. To my surprise I discovered the coolie dressed up in silks, leaning back at his ease and watching the others work. Upon investigation I discovered that this coolie had won all the others possessed in the world, and was paying them a small wage to perform such duties as fell to his own lot.

As to your enquiry respecting the general aspect of the country in the vicinity of Shanghai, I can only say, speaking broadly, that it is a monotonous level plain, which is accounted for by the fact that the soil consists of nothing but mud, which in the nature of it must lie flat. The original settlers had to dig ditches and

creeks every few yards to drain the land and enable them to stand upon it without sinking in.

If upon holiday bent the Shanghailander goes to Japan, Wei-Hai-Wei, Tsintau (German), or one of the few miniature health-resorts used principally by missionaries, who, having safely saved their souls, are engaged in carefully conserving their bodies in as comfortable circumstances as the funds will allow.

An amusing incident occurred at Tsintau this summer. Two Jews engaged in the opium trade—one of whom was a notorious gambler—were spending their holiday at this German resort. This was the occasion of the gambler's first visit to the town, but his companion had been to Tsintau previously. On the first evening of their stay they went for a walk, in the course of which they came to a hill about five hundred feet high.

"Fine hill that, and very difficult to climb," said one.

"Don't think much of it," dissented the gambler.

"Much harder to climb than it looks," insisted his companion, "and I'd bet you couldn't get to the top of it in an hour, especially seeing how you are blowing already."

"Nonsense," answered the gambler, scenting

a bet. "I'll wager fifty dollars I climb to the top and return here in an hour."

"Done," agreed his companion, "that's a bet, but I'll wait for you in the hotel. I can see from there. When you are on top, wave your handkerchief."

And so it was agreed, slips exchanged, and off went the gambler for the summit at his best speed. When he had ascended about one-third of the distance, however, he came to a wire fence, which he climbed forthwith, and was about to continue his journey when he found himself confronted by a German soldier with a horrible scowl and a fixed bayonet.

"Where are you going?" asked the soldier, pointing the bayonet at the Jew's top trousers button.

"Only to the top of that hill," answered the opium merchant.

"Tie this handkerchief round your eyes," answered he with the rifle, "and come with me."

"Where to?" asked the Jew, thinking of his fifty dollars.

"You'll find out when you're there," was the only answer forthcoming.

To cut a long story short, he was then led, blindfold, to the quarters of the officer in command of the garrison, detained an hour whilst

said officer finished his dinner, and obliged to remain in custody pending identification. The unkindest cut of all lay in the fact that it was absolutely necessary for him to send for the man who made the bet with him in order to establish his identity, for he knew no one else in Tsintau, and his friend insisted upon the bet being paid before performing the service on his behalf necessary to ensure his liberty.

There is another story going the rounds. A certain half-caste lady is, for some reason best known to herself, most desirous of hiding the nature of her origin. Not only so, but she resents, with a great deal of spite, any allusion to her "mixed" blood. On one occasion she entered a leading store to purchase some stockings in the new, fashionable shades. Unfortunately the assistant who served her had been snubbed on a previous occasion and was awaiting an opportunity to get even. Having asked for stockings, the assistant desired to know the shade she required. "Flesh colour" replied the Eurasian lady, and the man brought a box containing deep yellow hose and laid them out for her inspection.

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. XII

ROEHAMPTON, SURREY,
Friday night.

DEAR JIM,

I feel I must sit down and write you a nice long letter, which I am prompted to do firstly by a sense of duty. You may wonder at my using the word "duty" in this connection, but when you consider that a woman who consents to marry a man agrees to be all in all to him, does it not occur to you that when a woman very nearly marries a man she must ever after take a great interest in her very nearly husband?

Is it because he is continually brought to her mind at those times when she cannot help allowing her reveries to re-enact the scenes in the past that she loves? I can only speculate, but the fact is undoubted that ever since your proposal my interest in you has become insistent; I even go to your home and read all the letters you write to your people.

Judging from your, it must be confessed, somewhat jaundiced correspondence, one can

only presume that Shanghai is a terrible place for liver ; and you really do write such arrant nonsense about girls. Where is the pain? Has some Shanghai lassie scorned your, I fear, somewhat depreciated affections?

Do you remember the day you told me you wished to marry me ; and the place, just above Boulter's Lock? I, at least, shall never forget. You certainly propose divinely. I do not remember ever having heard a proposal that was put with more delicate tact, in all my experience.

I confess—now—that the horrid thought came to me that perhaps you had got it all out of a book, but I haven't come across it yet, although I have read heaps and heaps of love stories on purpose ; but there ! I know you wouldn't be so vulgar.

And oh ! do you remember my refusal? What sentiment ! what a giddy altitude of emotion we reached ! The delicate tenderness with which I expressed the poignancy of my regret was so kind and touching that the tears came into your poor little eyes, and as for me, I cried and *cried*—oh, it was *lovely*, but so exhausting, Jim, I felt quite faint after it. I do wish men wouldn't do these things—at least not so often.

The Thames is evidently mixed up in some occult way with my horoscope ; all my proposals

have occurred on its broad and placid bosom, except those two I told you about at the Welcome Club, and the one at Hurlingham—Bob's, you know.

Poor old Bob ! he is settled. You remember Violet—Eaton Square Violet ; the girl with the copper beech hair, who has the artistic temperament and plays things on the violin that make people fidget? She used to have unsatisfied longings, and wore horrid art shades of green, and straight up and down things from Liberty's, and low heels, and looked at one more in sorrow than in anger. She annexed him, artistically too, by explaining some psychic problem while sitting on the same settee with him after dinner ; which so worked upon Bob's impressionable nature that he grabbed her by the hair in the end, and repeatedly kissed her with such violent emotion that, as she explained to me afterward, she was too thoroughly frightened to refuse him.

As a result of this startling experience, she counselled me most earnestly never to monkey about with a man's soul if he has auburn hair and a red neck.

Whoever wrote about the British being the least emotional of races wasn't a woman, or, if it was a woman who committed that error, she must have been ug—plain.

I think the British as a race are getting more emotional every day ; perhaps on account of the *entente* ; anyhow, we are having more trouble with our servants than ever before, though Mrs. Denby says there is not nearly so much bother with her housemaids since you left. Take, for instance, my maid. Of course, she is French, but the butler isn't. Now, to illustrate my meaning. This afternoon, whilst I was arranging flowers in my bedroom, she rushed in and swooned on my pink *éolienne* that I was keeping for Violet's wedding and had been examining on a chair.

When I had brought her round with the aid of some brandy, she had the hardihood to explain that mother had just caught her kissing Baxter (Baxter is the butler, you know) in the linen-cupboard.

I told her, of course, that if she couldn't find a more suitable place to amourize than our linen-cupboard she would have to go. Menial love-making is so crude, don't you think?

But to return to Bob. Can you possibly imagine him, after a night at White's, coming slowly and gingerly downstairs, holding the banisters with one clammy hand and his throbbing head with the other, and praying fervently that his one boiled egg will be good to him?—do you remember the time he opened the bad

one at the Manor?—to find Violet in her yellowest green art costume, sitting intently watching him with her unblinking eyes (that always remind me of poached eggs), a “missionary,” expression on her face, and “painful duty” questions on her tongue : Ugh !

Poor, poor old Bob !

I met the Wellmore girl last night, and she asked all kinds of questions about you, and appeared to be so interested that I took her away from her men and talked to her about you.

She tells me you treated her awfully badly, so I suppose you must have been good to her. *Never* be good to a girl, Jim ; you will get a fearful name if you are good to girls, and only the bad ones will have anything to do with you, and you know you really *must* think of settling down, now that the scandal about Dolly has blown over and she is married so nicely.

The Wellmore girl also told me to tell you that she has not forgotten, and never will. When I said “Forgotten what?” she blushed (she certainly is pretty). Now, I do hope, Jim, you have not been horrid with the Wellmore girl as well. I am going to draw her out about it, and if I find that you have said anything to her that you did not mean, or meant anything you did not

say, I shall tell Mr. Denby how much you really owe the Conduit Street tailor—so there.

Thanks ever so much for the lovely roses, but you mustn't be extravagant, Jim, or else you will never be able to save up enough to make a home for yourself.

Father saw the roses when they arrived, and asked whom they were from. I told him, of course, and he said that he supposed you hadn't got any Lloyd Georges out East. He told me to tell you not to come home again until the Conservatives get into office, especially if you have saved any money—but I assured him there was no fear of that (your saving money, I mean).

To this long letter I shall certainly expect you to send an equally long reply to one who was very nearly your own

GLADYS.

No. XIII

SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

You will be interested to learn that the foreigners here are in the habit of holding a regatta annually at a place called Hen-li, though whether the name was grown locally I do not know ; to me it sounds like a stretch of imagination. Although held at a place outside the foreign settlements, there has, until this year, been no serious difficulty with the natives. Objections, however, were forthcoming in the case of the regatta held last Saturday, 24th inst., and the Shanghai Taotai refused at the last moment to issue the passes necessary to enable houseboats, &c., to proceed to the scene. The Senior Consul thereupon requested the Taotai not to be silly, which request the Taotai promised to comply with, and as a result issued the necessary passes, which proves conclusively that he kept his word.

Of course, it is not the Taotai that is princi-

pally to blame ; the silliness that caused the trouble must be laid at the door of the people who arranged the regatta without going through the courteous formality of obtaining permission. When the Taotai received an objecting petition from the local smell-farmers to the effect that the foreigners would damage their crops, and take away with them some of the odours they had been maturing with such trouble and care, he had no alternative but to carry out the wishes of the local inhabitants as expressed by their officials, whose duty it is to see, among other things, that the people in their charge do not build up the great fortunes which cause such political trouble in America. Personally, I attended the regatta in an armoured cruiser disguised as a motor-boat, with a view to putting up a good fight in case of trouble, and leaving open a means of escape in the event of disaster, and I must confess that I have not enjoyed an outing so much for a long time, which prompts me to take off my hat to the committee who arranged the function, make them my best bow, and thank them for a very pleasant week end.

The regatta itself took place in glorious weather. Everybody was very happy, especially in the evening, for at our Hen-li, if there are

not as many people as attend the home tournament, there are quite as many drinks, and if one enters into the spirit—and soda—of the thing, the place looks quite crowded at night.

The committee, however, with admirable forethought placed empty barrels every few yards along the towing paths, so that any one who could not find his way home at night might sleep in one, and they also put up notices requesting visitors not to fall off the raised paths into the rice crops; evidently with the idea that should any one feel like falling down, the notice would remind him to fall outwards into the river.

I only saw these notices disregarded in one case, and the offender, after picking himself up from a rice bed, apologized to the crop and immediately afterwards fell into the river, which showed that his offence was at least unintentional.

Personally, I found myself stranded at something a.m. on the bank of the river opposite to the ironclad that brought me up, so proceeded to walk across the bridge.

This bridge is built of iron, and the cross ties are the sleepers on which the rails are laid—there is nothing between them. I am sure this is the case, because after going about ten yards with my dog in my arms, I trod on nothing

and fell through into the river, followed by the faithful beast I had been carrying, and we both swam home together.

Your query as to the visible effect of the awakening of China is too much for me altogether. I am only a griffin ; I will enquire further into the matter.

So far, however, China appears to me a nation that cannot possibly become more alert than is at present the case, for of the five different countries I have seen, and whose people I have had time to study, I must confess that I never came across one whose inhabitants are more wide awake than the Chinese.

For a foreigner, I consider I am possessed of a fair average amount of intelligence, and I own that never in the whole course of my experience have I been " done " so frequently and with such ease as I have in China.

Moreover, so far as I can at present judge, China did not develop at all : she was apparently born fully grown, hair and teeth included. Where the rest of mankind advanced through the successive stages of development known as the stone, bronze, and iron ages respectively, China, owing to her preposterous method of progressing backwards, started with the steal age, and all one hears about the awakening of China

seems to mean that she is about to retrograde sufficiently to give herself the necessary facilities



"VITUPERATION IS CONSIDERED TO BE OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE."

to annex in a more civilized, extensive, and gentlemanly way than she at present has the power to do, viz., by brute force.

Another trait of the Chinese character that even my short experience has given me time to observe, is that they do not fight, as we understand the term, for they are exponents amongst methods of dispute of the means universally employed by lower class women to get the better of an altercation, viz., hair-pulling, scratching—for which latter purpose they grow their finger nails to an enormous length—and vituperation, of which three, vituperation is considered to be of the greatest importance.

The explanation of this appears to be, that the Chinese, by employing many thousands more written characters than any other nation, are enabled to express their thoughts with a degree of subtle meaning that empowers them to heap such vitriolic, loathsome abuse upon each other, that the unskilful are unnerved and mentally incapacitated by the stunning force of malediction used by the adept.

This is a land of triumph for backstairs diplomacy : neither armipotence nor muscle can find a market, for both are outclassed by patient, subtle intrigue.

If I could afford the luxury I should be delighted to assent, so far as I am personally concerned, to the Chinese propagandism "China for the Chinese," for from what I have so far

seen of them, they thoroughly deserve to have to deal with themselves exclusively,—though in this I trust I am not uncharitable.

They are reputed to be ignorant and behind the times, yet, behind the scenes, pulling the strings, supplying the motive power that moves 80 per cent. of the business in Shanghai, is John Chinaman, impassive, inscrutable, giving his word and keeping it, once given, though the heavens fall—unless he can see a way to get out of it without “losing face,” but giving nothing else, and keeping everything else within reach.

Women and Chinamen bear a further resemblance to each other in that they are both practically impossible to understand, and the Chinese “boy” respects the foreign “missy” accordingly, for it is only amongst women that he meets his master at his own game. This to a great extent accounts for the extraordinary popularity of the institution of marriage in Shanghai, a woman being the best available go-between for a man in his dealings with the natives, though I do not deny that in some instances other reasons may weigh with the contracting parties.

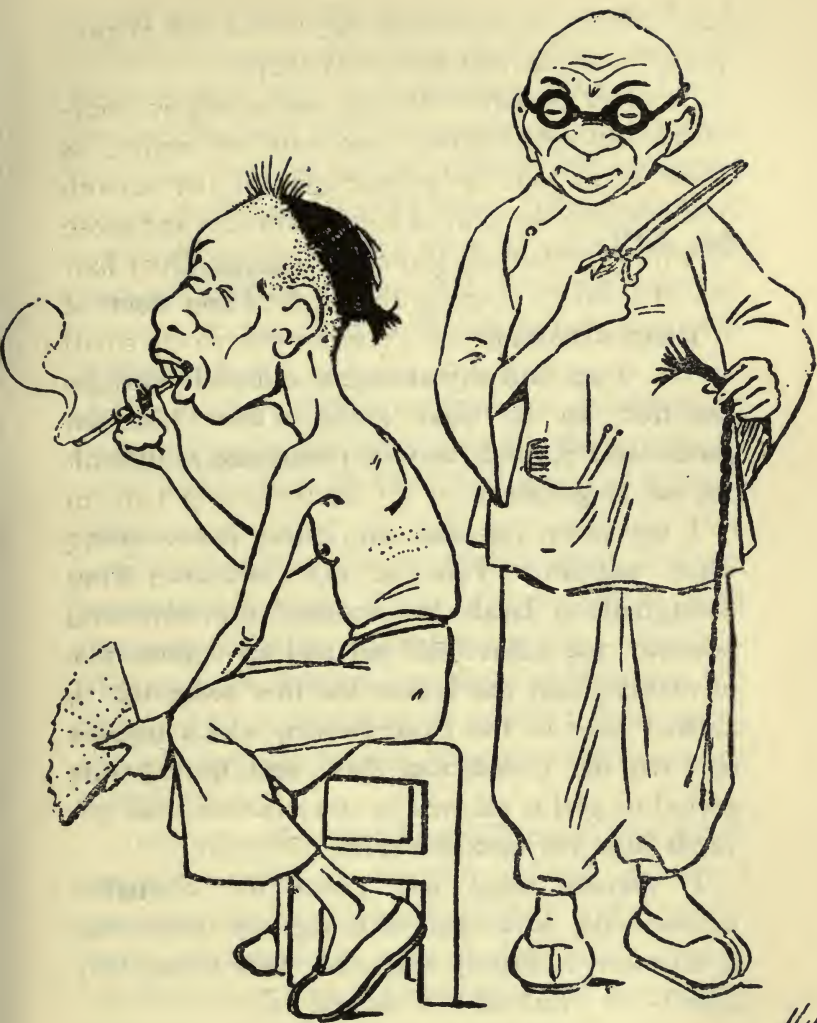
Ladies are, of course, at just as great a disadvantage in dealing with the Chinese as men. No one amongst the gentler sex can therefore

take offence at the foregoing unless she is prepared to admit that she is no lady.

Another instance of the characteristic similarity between Chinese men and the women of other races can be pointed out in the smooth whiteness of the skin of indoor workers and those continually clothed, and their freedom from hair on the body. Again, the waists and feet of Chinamen who are not gross are extremely small in the large majority of cases, and their muscles are not sharply defined. Very few Chinamen have beards, and it is an extremely difficult matter to get them to cut off their long hair, in which they take great pride. The queue-cutting movement recently instituted by Mr. Wu Ting Fang will probably take years to mature and become generally followed, though some few advanced Chinamen are already prepared to make the "sacrifice." They also have a passion for bargaining and a predilection for elaborate and costly raiment.

Hello ! twelve o'clock. Good-night.

JIM.



"THE SACRIFICE."

No. XIV

SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

DEAR GLADYS,

I am still sojourning in a land of delight conjured up by your letter, which was the pleasantest possible way of reminding me that I am not forgotten.

I am sorry you find my letters home somewhat peevish. This is not because some Shanghailand lassie has scorned my advances, however, for I have not yet had an opportunity of making any, the reason for this being that I arrived here in the close season, which doesn't end till the Caledonian Ball, and during this period no girl is allowed to stray farther than ten yards from her mother's side.

I wonder what has given the Shanghai matrons the idea that such vigilant overseeing is necessary? Surely when they were young they didn't—— But no ! it cannot be.

I am more than surprised to read your news about Violet and Bob ; I think Bob is very lucky

to get her ; she will do him a lot of good. I notice an improvement already, for you mention his eating an egg for breakfast. When I was fraternizing with Bob, it wasn't safe to mention breakfast to him at all during the morning, except on the day of a big shoot. He once threw a loaf at me for having what he called the bad taste to mention food at the nauseous hour of 8 a.m. It was from Bob that we got the term "breakfast and soda."

His mother always ordered his breakfast to be taken up to his room, but his menu used to make a noise exactly like the opening of a large seltzer.

She never saw the untouched food, because he invariably threw it out of the window on to one spot, which he called his breakfast cemetery. The dear old lady was so proud of Bob, too, for she used to explain that he couldn't drink much at night because he was always so thirsty in the morning !

Your remarks about Kitty Wellmore and Daisy positively made me shudder. Good Heavens ! one may not be ordinarily civil to a girl nowadays. I admit, of course, that there was a scandal about Daisy, but neither she nor I gave cause for it, for it came about thusly :—

While she was secretly engaged to Jim

Crawley, her present husband, he wrote her a somewhat prejugulent letter on plain notepaper, and signed it simply "Jim." This her mother found, and Daisy, in abject terror lest her engagement should be discovered just at the time that there was such a terrible row about Crawley, told her mother that I sent it, because she thought no one who knew me would believe it, so that it could do me no harm. This is what Daisy told me.

What she told Crawley was that she did it because my name was so extremely nifty already on account of suchlike incidents that one more couldn't hurt me.

What Crawley told me was that she did it because his name was so gamey over one or two other happenings of a similar nature, of which he was equally innocent, that Daisy's mother wouldn't stand any more, and that unless I wished to ruin two lives, &c.—finishing up with the quotation "Bear ye one another's burdens."

What I told Crawley was—— but never mind what I told Crawley.

Kitty Wellmore's case is quite a different matter, and if possible even less blameworthy, for that little trouble happened as follows:—Directly I found that I was hopelessly in love

with you, and couldn't hold it, I looked around for a girl that I was confident loved some one else. Kitty was qualified, and I explained that I was about to propose to another girl who had a critical taste in proposals, having been the recipient of so many, and would she, Kitty, allow me to practise, provided I, in return, gave her the benefit of my opinion as to how her various attitudes in this difficult situation would appear to the ass who was proposing. You see, I did not wish all my patient efforts to be thrown away by my making a mess of the proposal itself.

To this, like the good sort that she is, Kitty agreed, until she became engaged herself. She told me that her proposal went through (as she put it) "spiffingly," and that I had earned her eternal gratitude ; but by that time I was fairly well advanced in my subject, as you so kindly admit.

However, I am still cheerful, for I am addicted to turning round the bright side of imagination. I have always been dubious as to whether building castles in the air is, after all, such a profitless occupation. Condemnation of this elfin architecture is universal, but I have not yet heard the speech for the defence.

I submit, m'lud, this mental occupation is closely allied to hope, that it is in fact a

descendant (or perhaps an ascendant) in the direct line, having many characteristics which are hereditary, and that it is the means of picturing ideals which are so alluringly desirable that effort and perseverance are stimulated to their achievement.

Let's pretend, then, that I am going to win the Champion Sweepstakes, or even the Hankow Lottery, or to save money. You will notice that I have put the chances in the order of their feasibility, for my experience of banking accounts is that they are as hard to open as a locked safe with the wrong key, and yet close automatically, and that it is almost impossible to be really mean, unless one has plenty of money to act as an inducement.

One of the wealthiest men I know is, by the way, always otherwise occupied when the time comes to pay for any trivial expenditure we have jointly incurred ; and I believe it is this characteristic of his that enables him to put his hand in his pocket—and keep it there—which made him rich. Hence the term “means.” But again, if I built up a competence on these lines you would very properly refuse to marry me.

Here goes :—Let's pretend that I am possessed of sufficient means to offer you a half share in that enchanting honeyed lunacy which is

called honeymoon for short. My ideal would be to set the scene in a cottage at Pangbourne-on-Thames, furnished in the revived "Old English" style, which is the antithesis of the toboggan horsehair sofa, antimacassar, wax fruit in glass case, and delirium-tremens wall-paper period. Amongst these ideal surroundings we would write a happy travesty of that popular domestic tragedy known as "Love in a Cottage."

Doesn't the cottage somehow look familiar to your mind's eye? Let your imagination conjure up its small porch smothered in climbing dog-roses, the old-time garden with rows of varicoloured hollyhocks standing primly back against the high hedge, and pretending that they are shyly indifferent to the admiration they excite.

Honk ! honk ! pouf ! enter you and I in a 40-h.p. Darracq (ex Hankow Lottery proceeds), which in its panting efforts to recover its breath squirts a 90-h.p. stench over the dog-roses and hollyhocks, which soon takes the conceit out of *them*. As we alight we gracefully consign our car to the garage by a wave of the hand to our gold-mounted chauffeur (one thousand pounds a year, all found, when we are in funds).

We now dress for dinner, which operation is performed by taking off our hats and goggles

and splashing about round the pump, each waiting a turn at the bar of Sunlight soap.

We don't even have to go upstairs—because there aren't any—and the old family servant Baxter (late chauffeur), around whose person hovers a reminiscence of petrol, announces that dinner is served, whereupon in comes the Irish stew, which we call an entrée for old times' sake.

We are both highly elated over an offer just to hand to publish my latest book on domestic economy in a popular edition at fourpence halfpenny per copy (I to receive the halfpenny).

Terrible commotion without. Enter Baxter with his collar missing and his right hand bandaged. He announces that Mr. Bloggs insists upon seeing us immediately.

"Bloggs?" I enquire haughtily, "*Bloggs?* who or what is Bloggs?"

"Bloggs is the tradesperson as I 'ave honoured with your custom, sir—meat."

We severely reprimand Baxter for allowing our peace to be disturbed by any vulgar tradesman, more especially one so lost to all sense of ordinary civility as to ask for money; threaten to pay him the six months' wages owing to him upon the first convenient opportunity, and dispense with his services.

Baxter, moved to tears, is just explaining that the tradesperson executed a flanking movement by kicking him on the shins, when enter Bloggs with a bill about four yards long, and an inflamed eye, announcing that we must pay or look out. We reply that we have no choice but to look out. At this Bloggs wishes to know why we ordered the meat if we didn't intend to pay for it. In reply we enquire whether he can be really serious in supposing that we should voluntarily choose to starve.

At this moment he catches sight of your face in the rose lamplight, his jaw drops, he goes "hot and cold all over," his adamant heart is melted at the sight of your ravishing beauty, and the situation is saved. He doesn't mind if he does—not quite all the soda, and thank you kindly, sir—and as to the little matter of the bill, why, he 'opes as 'ow we will overlook his bad temper, and he will call again at a more suitable time.

After this episode you make love to me with the utmost violence, to compensate me for the worries and cares I have to undergo to provide a home for you.

(Slow music, very, softly expressing yearning tenderness.)

After what might appear to some an inter-

minable time, I recover. We take the train up to town, and finish the evening at Daly's Theatre, followed by supper at Kettners', on the strength of the publication of my new book. "One quart, and one pint of No. 36 straight off the ice, but keep the pint till I call for it, and mind the oysters are in the deep shell."

If I win the Hankow Lottery I will cable immediately. Meantime, please keep your mental vision resolutely fixed on the cloud cottage depicted above, to which I beg you will pick up your skirts and fly for refuge if any one else proposes to you ; for with all humility I beg you will never dare, for one calendar second, to imagine that you are ever going to marry any other than

Your devoted

JIM.

No. XV

SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

Replying to your query as to the number of Consuls here, there are fourteen in all. Seeing that every question of importance is regarded from fourteen national points of view, agreement must require great tact.

On one occasion it happened that a certain Consul stood out against all the others who wished to close a gambling saloon owned by one of his nationals. At the time it was currently reported that there was only one of his own countrymen in the town, but so complicated is the legal procedure in this international settlement that the greatest difficulty was experienced in effecting the arrest of this single representative of a South American Republic, whose property lay just outside the boundary on Chinese territory; the difficulty being that his own Consul refused to issue a

warrant, and no other Consul was competent to do so.

In the present Gilbertian state of the law here, any one-horse Republic can send a Consul and one subject to take up his abode in the settlement—or just out of it. If that Consul, from reasons of policy or—well, let us say any reasons at all—chooses to “protect” that subject, and refuses to issue a warrant for his arrest in a case of gambling or pimping, or any other crooked practice which may be tolerated in his own benighted country, none of the other Consuls are empowered to interfere.

In the case under discussion, however, the Council decided to risk it, but so determined was the resistance that the gambler referred to armed his Indian watchmen and actually fired on the police when they arrived. The police rough-handled an Indian watchman, and one of the constables, although obeying orders, was summoned for assault.

During the fracas the watchman bit a policeman in the arm, and a local paper reported the incident as follows :—“ The Indian watchman who bit a constable in the arm last Thursday at the Alhambra is not expected to recover.”

The report did not say whether he was summoned for failing to keep the piece, but it would appear to be a somewhat excessive punishment to put a man in hospital who is already tired of feeding on "slops."

The gambling den was closed, however, in this instance, and there were no international complications.

Not only does the Municipal Council have to consider the view of its actions that will be taken by fourteen Consuls of different nationalities, but it is obliged to take into account the Chinese authorities also, whose policy is invariably one of obstruction.

Our settlement abuts upon some of the poorest, most dilapidated and insanitary property imaginable, inhabited by beggars and thieves, a perfect hotbed for bubonic plague and other diseases, and a dumping-ground for ever-accumulating filth.

In consequence we are continually trying to obtain an extension of the settlement to form a belt around our land, over the sanitary and police administration of which we shall have some control. Every move in this direction, however, is met with a most determined resistance, and the question is perpetually a bone of contention.

I note your query as to the meaning of the term "abacus," and will try to explain it to the best of my knowledge and belief. An abacus, then, is an ancient form of rosary used by the Chinese in the exercise of their religion, and consists of a shallow box, across the open top of which stout wires are stretched, having a number of movable knobs of wood threaded upon them. The instrument is employed by the Chinese principally as a means of working out the exchange of taels into dollars by double entry—one entry for you, and one for themselves.

Again it becomes necessary to explain that payment in dollars is customary—generally speaking—only in the retail trades, large amounts being calculated in taels. The clearest conception of the idea you could get would be to compare it with your custom of paying in guineas and being forced to use an "exchange rate" that varies daily.

In modern times (that is, since foreigners came to China and improved upon these antiquated methods by the introduction of double-entry bookkeeping and balance-sheets) the abacus is used to find out where the accountant's mistake occurred.

The Municipal Council has inaugurated a

mosquito campaign, so that the girls can wear openwork in the approaching summer without getting punctured. Their method of extermination is to pour crude petroleum into the ditches that contain stagnant water. I understand that there is nothing a mosquito dislikes so cordially as crude petroleum. Probably those Shanghailanders who live near the ditches treated in this manner will soon be able to understand why. I got a whiff of some myself the other day, and must confess I seldom smelt a more crude smell.

Mosquitoes bite most frequently round the ankles, and it is for this reason that the youth of the town use strawberry coloured socks, bespattered with bright yellow spots, which either drive the pests away or stupefy them should they attempt to light upon the wearer's foot.

I saw a man yesterday with a pair of astigmatic pattern hose that made me feel quite giddy, and I am much bigger than a mosquito.

Before I close this letter, I must acquaint you with a really smart piece of work for which I presume our Health Officer is responsible. To whomsoever is responsible, I take off my hat, make my best bow, and with my hand on my heart say "Thank you." I refer to the

discovery of plague-infected rats in the settlement, and the energetic means employed in their destruction.

The man who is responsible for their discovery certainly does not suffer from "Maskeeitis," and whatever his salary, his brains are worth more to the community than ever the community could pay, wherefore we are still in his debt.

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. XVI

SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

The longer I remain in Shanghai, the more convinced do I become that the town is a riddle difficult to solve. Those that have the answer, pay it into the Bank ; and when one asks them how they manage it, they either make a noise like the statue of Sir Harry Parkes on the Bund, or favour one with an artistic improvement on the widely adopted methods of Ananias.

The town is the more difficult to understand on account of the fact that the business Chinese are altering as rapidly as, if not more so than, the official classes. It used to be the saying here that a Chinaman's word is as good as his bond. My experience may be peculiar, but on account of that experience I have no further use for either the one or the other. I shall in future stipulate for dollars, and plenty of time in which to test them.

There still survive, however, a few of the old school of business Chinese who can be trusted absolutely. Most of these are very old fashioned. They have hardly "advanced" at all.

If the Chinese, as a whole, were reliable, what a business nation they would make ! The habit of lying appears to be much more universal, deep rooted, and a far greater obstruction to progress than that of opium-smoking.

The system adopted by the retail shopkeeper is typical of his business ideas. So far as I am able to ascertain, the owner engages a large staff, the majority of whom live, not upon wages, but upon what, as a lawyer would put it, they can pick up, scrape up, grub up, squeeze out, root out, wrench out, wheedle out, threaten out, plot out, or otherwise obtain.

If one enquires the price of an article from the smallest boy in the establishment, the youth adds on so much in order to pay himself and those over him who threaten him with sudden death if he doesn't share his illgotten gains. Go higher and enquire of the burglar who is acting as assistant manager, and the price is less, as the small brigand and the intervening bandits do not require to be considered. Enquire of the Chief Marauder and you get a quotation at about 20 per cent. above what he is prepared to accept.

Haggle for the reduction of 20 per cent., and, if you are successful, you obtain an article worth about half the price you gave for it.

I may state without fear of contradiction, except, of course, from those who do not know the first thing about it, that shopping in Shanghai amongst the Chinese stores is almost as bad as shopping amongst the foreign ones. These latter, of course, represent the "possible," or extreme limit of the boundary between trade and body-snatching.

As an example of slimness, a case came to my knowledge last week wherein the owner of a godown let part of it, and arranged with the tenant to make a small reduction on the rent in consideration of his allowing the "To Let" sign to remain up. This was done so that the landlord could still avail himself of the reduction allowed off the rates for unlet property.

I have often wondered whether an honest Chinaman could be obtained by feeding him from his earliest infancy upon manufactured baby food, interspersed with frequently administered violent purgatives.

Feeding bottles, however, cannot be used by the Chinese, because the mother cannot trust the baby with the bottle ; and as a result the brat

sucks in the elements of dishonesty with its mother's milk.

Dishonesty is the only quality possessed by the Chinese that enables foreigners to make a living here. If they were honest they could beat us out in trade in six months. Fortunately, for us, the only way to eradicate the cheating instinct would be to flood the entire country to the depth of forty fathoms for six weeks.

Judging from this standpoint, it certainly does not look well for the many people here who are making big money out of Chinese business. That there is a large class "in the know" there is no doubt, as, *per capita* of the population, we have probably a larger percentage of inhabitants who keep motor-cars than any other city in the world, while some of our taipans are so disgustingly wealthy that they don't even have to live with their wives.

You will the more easily realize what this means when I tell you that, whereas it costs in England, as you are aware, about the same to keep a horse as a wife, here one can keep ten ponies for the same money as it is necessary to spend to keep even a small woman. Most of the men here, with limited means, naturally prefer the ponies and single wickedness.

Had I known at the time of my arrival what

I have since learned, I should have applied for a job as a missionary. Christianity, judging by the results apparent here, fetches a far higher price than piece goods, or any other home export ; and the sales department is subsidized by all those thousands of wealthy people in various parts of the world who suffer from either an itchy conscience or fatty degeneration of the brain.

The race able to cope with the Chinese most successfully is, undoubtedly, the Japanese, who appear to be so fitted by nature to play this intricate game of business spoof that they can hold their own and a bit of the other man's as well.

If one is observant, one can see the Japanese flag becoming more and more prevalent about our streets.

You may be interested to know that the skating-rink craze has taken hold of the town. From personal experience I can vouch that teaching a heavy woman to skate is as hard work as going four rounds with the gloves ; and not half so interesting after, say, her third fall, when the novelty has worn off.

It is a noticeable fact that the first thing a woman thinks about when she falls down in a skating rink is her leg. The second thing is

her other leg. The third is her hat, and the fourth and last whether she has hurt herself. The views of the men looking on are, strange to say, quite similar, except that they don't trouble about the two latter. This is not callousness ; it is only because the masculine idea is that a woman can only fall upon one part of her anatomy, which part is so munificently endowed by nature to meet the shock that she cannot possibly hurt herself.

A noticeable characteristic of this complicated town is its uncompromising conservatism. The only novelty that is thoroughly appreciated is a new drink or a pretty woman.

The business men have traded for years and years in a thoroughly easy-going way, and have been successful. Now that times are harder, competition is far more keen, and the Chinese are profiting by the lessons they have learned whereby they can get the better of each other by foreign dodges as well as native, without outside assistance, I firmly believe these old crusted business men will stand by their obsolete guns till their banking accounts are in shreds.

The newcomer, seeing this, is apt to imagine that he is going to improve matters by the introduction of new ideas and more modern procedure. It will be only by the expenditure of

some thousands of taels, and at least six months' work, that he can satisfy himself that the only way to introduce new ideas into a Shanghai taipan is by mixing them with his drinks.

Cheer oh !

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. XVII

MY DEAR FATHER,—

I have just returned from the Saddle Islands, which I reached by means of the H.A.L. steamer *Tsintau*, a very comfortable little ship. I am unaware at what time we arrived, as I do not, as you know, get up officially until eight, and I made up my mind not to go ashore until the island was properly aired.

Coming on deck at nine o'clock, I found that we were anchored in a little deep-set bay ; the morning was glorious, and the blue sea, with its darker smudges here and there caused by cloud shadows, was breaking upon the fangs of the entrance to the bay in high feathers of spray, like white ostrich plumes, and around three sides of us were the heaped-up, rugged hills.

From the top of the hill, the view is grand. Many little rocky islands are dotted about, upthrust through the sea, with their line of breakers at the base, like white lace petticoats swishing around their feet.

In returning to the little sandy inlet, where the ship's boat landed and delivered us, we had to pass through a Chinese village, which hangs on, as it were, by its eyebrows to the face of the hill. Here we found the inhabitants hard at work upon their staple industry—manufacturing smells—and apparently trade was flourishing with them. My first introduction to the village was made as I suddenly came round a corner and ran into a line of fish hanging up on a string in the sun, in front of a large smell factory. The fact that these fish were left unguarded, in a country where theft is considered an accomplishment, at first surprised me greatly, till I realized that if any one took the stuff away the owner, in the house near by, would immediately become aware of its absence on account of the change in the atmosphere.

As we had just left the summit of the hill, entering this village was like receiving a blow in the face with a pillow stuffed with pollution just as one was leaving Paradise. A little farther along we encountered the local Stock Exchange for Stinks, and were obliged to flee, so that I cannot tell you any more about the village.

After this experience I can understand why

the Chinese do not use scent. There isn't any strong enough.

We had a glorious swim from the ship's gangway upon our return. No one can appreciate clean sea water and hills more than a Shanghai-lander at the end of the summer.

Training for the Autumn Race Meeting has started, and the first batch of griffins is here. They are a particularly nasty tempered lot, and bite, kick, buck, and scratch. At least one can buck better than an American broncho, for he sent his rider half way to heaven the other morning. The rider (or rather tried-to-rider) turned two complete somersaults before returning to earth. I do not believe any broncho-buster would have kept with that pony when he put up the performance referred to, yet it is quite on the cards that he will be as quiet as a sheep for the remainder of his life, for the China pony is like the Chinaman—directly you have made up your mind what he is going to do he alters his tactics.

It is surprising that so few of these wonderful little animals are exported, for a handier, more useful all-round mount cannot be imagined.

They carry a man weighing 150 lb. a mile in 2.06 minutes when trained, which, considering they scale on an average thirteen hands, and cost

so little, may be considered remarkable, for it is only after a pony has proved his pace that his price advances—which is a matter of gambling. Their immunity from sickness and faults is remarkable.

The Chinese, with characteristic business acumen, do not send a pony stallion or mare away from the breeding districts ; and the fact that they do not take them off the grass until they are at least four years old probably accounts for the absence of foot troubles and lameness amongst them.

They are, generally speaking, as game as a bantam, and though it would be absurd to compare them with an English, or, to go still farther, an Irish hunter, if we exiles had to do without the plucky little China pony half our sport would disappear. To us he is as invaluable as a greyhound to a farmer in the Peterborough country at home ; and you know what that means. Mention of the China ponies recalls the fact that they have been worked upon polar expeditions. Yet they are successfully used here for polo at a temperature of 99° in the shade—and damp at that ! They are transported from Manchuria by sea, and in some cases driven overland.

Now that there is a claimant to the discovery of the North Pole, I expect we shall find



THE OVERLAND GRIFFIN.

several others. We have at least one in Shanghai, who asserts that he was there years ago, but that as he has no proofs he did not claim the honour. As a matter of fact he has already earned such a reputation by his paralysing lies, that he evidently knew it would be useless his putting forward any claim.

As he pathetically remarked, it is only a truthful man who can lie with any prospect of success. Now that people can see for themselves that it is possible to discover the Pole, he has decided to tell the truth, and own up to having been there himself.

This man is well known here, and is a member of a certain club affected by mercantile marine officers, which should be, in itself, a sufficient guarantee of his integrity. It appears that he reached the Pole in the company of two Esquimaux (as against the other explorers' one), and that he claims the territory so discovered in the name of the Shanghai Municipal Council. As a matter of fact, it is quite useless for America, or any other nation, to try to support a claim against our Council, for the Americans are children at diplomacy in comparison with the Chinese, and the Chinese even cannot hold their own with our City Fathers. Our man is awaiting the published statements of both explorers,

for he has some information which he claims will utterly confound either of them, unless they strictly adhere to the truth. In any case he is convinced that they cannot deny his priority of right.

I feel that, whatever the truth of Dr. Cook's story, he is entitled to our regard, for his name will thunder down the ages as either the greatest explorer or the greatest liar that ever lived, and, whichever may turn out to be the truth, he is a man of mark. Both Christopher Columbus and Ananias are prominent names in history, yet it is worthy of note that Ananias has hit the popular fancy even more than C. Columbus, Esq.

Your affectionate son,
JIM.

No. XVIII

MY DEAR FATHER,—

You will doubtless be interested to hear that we have a Chinese suffragette, a lady who bolted her learning in America. This lady is of opinion that intercourse is too free between men and women. Free! The thought of a Bond Street bonnet-shop makes me shudder even now.

Miss Kong, the lady referred to, does not tell us whether, if the suffragettes obtain equal rights with men, they will go red in the face, thump the table, and insist upon paying half of the household expenses.

She also expresses surprise that the American women don't know how to cook or to sew, quite ignoring the fact, apparently, that no young woman does.

Even admitting, for the sake of argument, that the trouble and time spent by the Chinese girl, and the pain endured by the Chinese men as a result of her culinary education, are worth

the unspeakable filth which results, I quite fail to see why she should recommend our women to mess about in the kitchen and upset the cook.

Personally, I wouldn't marry the prettiest woman in the world, given the opportunity, if she insisted upon doing her own cooking. Marriage has been described as giving half one's food to get the other half cooked. This is, of course, an absurd philosophy, since no woman under forty-five can cook, and then she is fitted for no other occupation. There is neither difficulty nor expense about getting a new cook, but the same cannot be said about getting one's wife a new complexion.

Again, imagine sitting opposite to a lynx-eyed wife, with a slab of dreadnought pudding upon one's plate, and trying to conjure it bit by bit under the table to the cat without being observed !

Again, as to sewing. Imagine the dear, thrifty little wife making one's socks and ties, to say nothing of waistcoats. Cast your thoughts over the home-made ties you have seen ; call to mind the waistcoats ; let your shuddering imagination dwell upon thick, hairy, worsted socks with four darns in each foot, that continually try to crawl down over your boots, and tell me why this wretched woman

is trying to upset the march of civilization in foreign lands. Avaunt, woman ! cook seaweed and explosive eggs, sew preposterous pants for your own mankind, but leave us in comfort.

Whilst she confines her efforts to teaching Chinese women their household duties, all is well ; but methinks she could have done this without leaving the salubrious streets of her native land. Making Chinese clothing cannot require a great deal of learning. It is only necessary to stitch together a garment that will fit any of the family equally badly, and there you are ! Moreover, this is a one man one coat country ; the garment, being entailed, descends to the male heir.

We recently received a visit from a troupe of entertainers who have entertained us immensely, but not in the manner advertised in the bills. The show was not a success, and directly the ghost ceased to walk, the proprietor commenced to run, and left the poor mummers stranded here. Then we heard that one of the actors, who was married, had run away with one of the actresses who wasn't. Public sympathy was aroused to such an extent that a substantial amount was raised by subscription for the deserted fair one. Now it transpires that the joke is on us, for this elaborate " plant " has

been worked by the same trio, I understand, on four previous occasions, the method being for them to effect a happy reunion in some more profitable locality and sort themselves out again.

In the line of entertainment, Shanghai expects a great deal for a very little money, and is very apt to complain about its lack of amusement, yet, when anyone puts up the very best show the probable returns will warrant, Shanghailanders put their hands in their pockets, and—keep them there.

Perhaps the explanation of this is that Shanghai just wants to be left alone, make its money quietly, have a good time on Saturday night, and cool its head under the electric fans in church on Sunday morning, thus building up a reputation for a quiet and regular life which is very nearly, but not quite, justified by the facts.

As I write, we have only about another ten days of the heat to endure, after which saddles, guns, and dancing shoes will have to be overhauled, as the races, paper-hunts, and dances will shortly require our attention. The close season for birds ends during September, and that for girls with the Caledonian Ball.

As to shooting, I am afraid the day is past for good bags. Time was when the sportsman

could return with his houseboat loaded down with deer and a goodly number of pheasant, snipe, quail, bamboo partridge, hares, woodcock, plover, duck, geese, wild turkey or sand-grouse, according to district shot over, but nowadays he must go far afield and be content with two or three brace of birds a day.

The natives are also more hostile to the sport as practised by foreigners than heretofore, and trouble is becoming more and more common. The cry "Lally loong" (thief) follows the sportsman everywhere.

The price of accidents has also advanced out of all reason. Should a native be inadvertently punctured by a careless or incompetent gunner, trouble spreads like a prairie fire, and the whole countryside is roused within half an hour. When one finds that this admittedly righteous indignation has for its sole object the acquisition of gain, one cannot help losing a certain amount of sympathy for the agitators, for the indignant relatives are immediately soothed to placid content by the transfer of a satisfactory number of dollars.

The end of September will also witness the return of all those employés who have taken a trip home on six months' leave. I say employés because I do not know any employers

who have been able to afford it this year, trade being so bad. These home-trippers usually depart in high glee at the prospect of getting away from Shanghai, and come back with even greater glee at the prospect of returning to it, which, you will observe, is the best possible frame of mind for each occasion. It will, I trust, be my good fortune to experience both next year. I am, in fact, already anticipating some of the delights of looking up old haunts, and, when my mind runs upon this subject, I always think of old George, the head-waiter at my favourite restaurant.

I remember his smile when I returned from Africa the second time. He bustled up with a cheery greeting, as if I had been away a week, and remarked: "Ah, sir, glad to see you back again. Let me see, two years next month, isn't it, sir?—yessir, that's it [right to a month too], and you'll start with anchovies and capers, sir, I suppose, *as usual*? Yessir," and over the meal I got more news than I could have obtained from any one else I know, for old George knows his West End, and the inside history thereof, like a book.

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. XIX

MY DEAR FATHER,—

The worst feature of the summer here is undoubtedly the hot, stifling nights. We have so far had three memorable ones during which not a breath of air seemed available. If you lie down and try to sleep the perspiration runs into your mouth and chokes you. There is a story here of a man who on account of this inconvenience slept in the bath, but the poor chap forgot to pull the plug out of the waste pipe, and he was drowned in his own perspiration at 3.30 next morning.

The last hot night we had, I drank one bottle of Eno's and three of barley water. At 5.30 a.m. I had to go up to St. George's for a drink.

It is unwise to keep either intoxicating liquors or mineral waters in the house during the hot weather. If one does so, during the nights when sleep is impossible, one cannot avoid becoming

either "toxod" or painfully distended with carbonic acid gas.

A hot night is the very devil in Shanghai. Sleeping under an electric fan is apt to give one catarrh of the bowels. Not sleeping under an electric fan means not sleeping at all. If one lives in a quiet district the groans of the fat ladies and the blood-curdling imprecations of the adipose men who live within a hundred yards of one are so distressing that any hopes of sleep must be finally abandoned.

In your question about the doctors you do not say whether you mean native or foreign ; if foreign, I really don't know anything about them, except that they are owed more money than would enable the majority of them to go home and live without doing any one further injury for the remainder of their lives. No one can owe the grocer money, but a doctor, of course, doesn't matter, he is "so good, don't you know."

The worthy Dr. Lalcacca, whose murder you will have heard about, was an example of this kind of medico. He did more good in a quiet way than many a philanthropist, and I admire his charity more than Carnégie's, because no one heard about it. It was simply that the bill didn't come in, that's all.

The Chinese doctor, however, is a thing of

pure joy, provided, of course, one doesn't have anything to do with him professionally. His prescriptions range from dried spiders to powdered deer-horns. He requires no degree, but builds up a reputation by spreading the fame of his cures amongst imaginative people ; upon somewhat similar lines to those adopted by the proprietors of our own patent medicines, but without their facilities for advertisement and wholesale deception. Each doctor has a certain number of cures that have been kept a secret, and handed down from father to son. Many women " practise " medicine, and I have known some of them who, as a result of their high reputation, can and do charge as much as 700 taels—about £87—for taking a case in hand.

The Chinese doctor is an adept at that branch of surgery and homeopathy which falls under the head of counter-irritation.

For pains in the leg such as accompany gout, rheumatism, &c., he thrusts needles about five inches long into the flesh (acupuncture). The effect is magical, for the gouty or rheumatic pains cannot be felt for some time after the needles are withdrawn. In obstinate cases these needles are left imbedded in the flesh, cotton is tied to the protruding ends, soaked in fat, and lighted. The needles thus become nearly red-

hot, in which state they are accounted as more effective.

For throat troubles he rubs dirty brass coins on the skin of the neck until inflammation is set up. It is highly probable that after this treatment the patient doesn't know whether he has sore throat or not, and his skin is giving him such a devil of a time that he doesn't care. One of the native doctor's most reliable cures for derangement of the stomach (a serious complaint when one realizes that the Chinaman regards the stomach as the thinking apparatus) is live earthworms swallowed with honey. A "dose" of medicine frequently consists of a quart of liquid, and a pill weighing two ounces is not uncommon, whereas a "treatment" may comprise twenty-five packages of various dried vermin, entrails, claws and what not, ranging from the genital organs of a cat to powdered tigers' bones. In the case of many of these concoctions a propitious day must be selected for their preparation.

The idea that the virtues of an animal or even a human being are transmitted to the eater of its or his flesh still prevails. For this reason tigers' blood promotes courage, and soldiers have been known to eat the heart of a decapitated robber chief in order to absorb the fearlessness of the deceased.

The blood of executed criminals is also highly prized for its virtue as a cure for consumption, though I have been unable to assign any reason—even Chinese reason—for this conclusion.

In justice to the best class of Chinese doctor, however, they have some herb medicines of such wonderful value and efficacy in bowel complaints that they are worthy of careful investigation and study by the faculty.

The Chinese make good patients. I myself have seen a Chinaman, working on a building, stop a full hod of bricks falling from a height of fifty feet with his head. He immediately plugged the nasty wound with a double handful of mortar and continued working.

He was on piece-work.

No thought of the Workmen's Compensation Act troubled him, but the Chinese foreman probably docked him a few cash for the mortar.

I once saw a Chinaman, walking across the road with his mouth agape and his thoughts far away, suddenly have his interest in his immediate surroundings aroused by an electric tram travelling at the rate of eight miles an hour hitting him in the only part of the anatomy overworked by those who live a sedentary life. The impact sent him about twenty yards in a

succession of variegated somersaults. Immediately he stopped he scrambled to his feet, glanced fearfully over his shoulder, and made off at top speed as if pursued by Satan himself. He probably thought he would be prosecuted for obstruction.

It is amongst these people that the Chinese doctor "practises."

The most interesting happening this week is the final closing of the Alhambra, which is a gilded palace of gambling, and the resort of ladies whose claim to virtue has been allowed to lapse.

This establishment is situate some way out of the International Settlement, and has been run for many years under Spanish protection. This protection was obtained by the proprietor as a subject of the Argentine Republic, the affairs of which turbulent State were in charge of the Spanish Consul of that day.

As a result of this case, one can only conclude that the Council and police are quite capable of looking after the town, for they certainly unravelled a tangled skein of legal process in this instance. We are to-day awaiting with interest the final act in a play that could never have been set in any other part of the world; for the International Settlement, from

the point of view of legal procedure, possesses complications that could only be equalled by an extravagant comic opera.

The Alhambra would make an excellent Lunatic Asylum, under municipal control. The town is badly in need of one, and the old associations of the place make the suggestion peculiarly appropriate.

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. XX

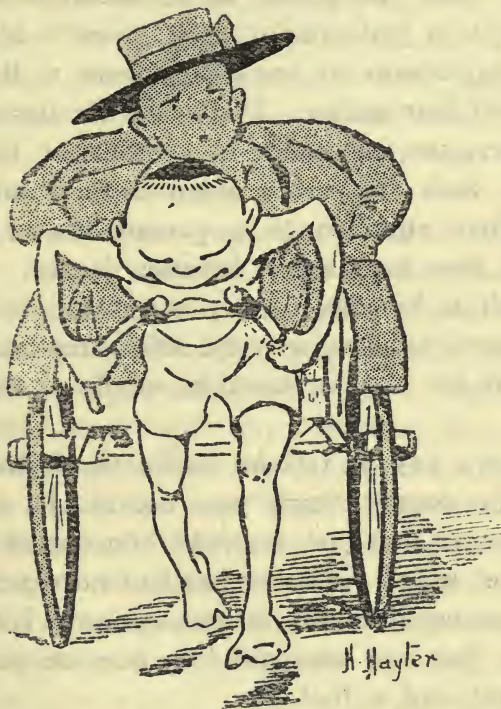
MY DEAR FATHER,—

Recently a go-ahead individual imported some hundreds of excellent rubber-tired 'rickshas, and placed them at our disposal. More power to him. Unfortunately he didn't import any one to pull them, and as a result of employing local labour the vehicles now have soft tired coolies as well as wheels. Whenever I require a 'ricksha, I call one of the new ones, but they don't come because I am not an American sailor, neither do I carry the distinctive marks of the globe-trotter, and the womenfolk that honour me with their society do not wear green veils hanging down their charming backs.

The 'ricksha is undoubtedly a handy means of transport, but has its disadvantages. In the old days, I understand, the local "pullman-cars" were in a most dilapidated condition.

I myself, on one occasion, stepped into one of the old type and sat down somewhat heavily,

whereat the entire vehicle collapsed, and I found myself standing amongst the ruins—no less than twelve separate pieces. The coolie thereupon



THE 'RICKSHA.

demand compensation, as I had taken away his means of livelihood.

As it is still illegal to kill Chinese in public, I took no reprisals, but secured another 'ricksha,

only to make the disconcerting discovery that the coolie favoured garlic as an article of diet.

It is a distressing experience to talk to any person who eats garlic, as its devotees usually belong to a gesticulating race, given to blowing their arguments in one's face from a distance of about four inches. Under the circumstances, however, one can resort to stratagem ; for just as one feels that one is about to faint, one can call their attention to a passing object, and, whilst they look away, breathe deeply.

With a 'ricksha coolie, however, one must hang one's head out over the side of the machine, or wait for a side street to supply a slant of wind.

If you pay a 'ricksha coolie more than his fare, he doesn't thank you, because he cannot understand that you overpaid him out of kindness—of which virtue he has had no experience and consequently has no conception. He concludes that you overpaid him because you are ignorant and a fool.

In this he is quite right.

He keeps a stock of brass twenty-cent and ten-cent pieces in order to give you change. These he buys for a few cash apiece, there being a regular trade in bad coins, the rates of purchase varying according to the amount

of real silver used in the process of manufacture.

When you have paid him with a good twenty-cent piece, he will wait till your back is turned, then run after you, and, placing his muddy paw upon the sleeve of your white coat, pull you back, and show you the obviously brassy coin he has substituted for your good one whilst your back was turned.

Of course your rage rises like a foaming torrent if you know the trick, but what can you do? If you hit him you will probably injure the poor brute for life ; you mustn't kill him outright ; so you mutter to yourself " Be calm," and walk away with him following you along the pavement and leaving the marks of his prehensile organ on your clean coat, whilst the bystanders look at you in scorn as one who is trying to rob a poor, innocent 'ricksha coolie.

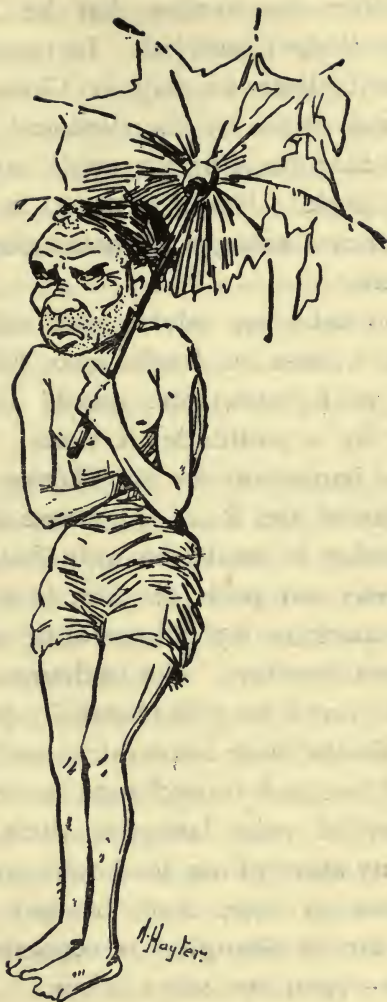
After that you pay him his exact fare and no more, for then he knows that you are a sensible person with whom it is useless trying any tricks.

The 'ricksha coolie's favourite prey is a drunken sailor or a tourist, and the American naval seaman is his ideal ; but he will run half a mile to escape a missionary, whose calling he can detect at a glance ; for he knows as well

as I, and far better than you do, that missionaries have no money to spare, because their furniture and summer holidays cost such a lot of money.

There is a pathetic humour for the initiated in recalling the incident of the "Chinese Slavery" cry once heard in Britain. No one could make slaves of a large number of Chinese, with their secret societies, guilds, and wonderful cleverness in seeking out and using to the fullest advantage every law and regulation of their employers that works to the advantage of labour.

If you could see the clothing of the average poor coolie, and your geometrical eye could appreciate the concave curve of his neglected, attenuated stomach, your bowels of compassion would yearn towards him, and you would never—by political agitation or any other means—place difficulties in his way when happy chance offered him employment and food in any foreign land where his services could be controlled in such a manner that white labour could find additional sources of employment as a result of his advent. The least said about morals and politics the better, for I am intensely and happily ignorant of either, but somebody for ever appears to be trying to prevent the Chinese coolie giving his matchless services to those who most require



"THE CONCAVE CURVE OF HIS NEGLECTED,
ATTENUATED STOMACH."

them under the excuse that he will not be properly clothed and fed. In consequence the poor devils have to stay in China practically naked and starve by the thousand yearly.

I see that the English public are shying at Chinese pork. Here, at least, is a point of resemblance between Shanghailanders and Londoners.

If you take my advice you will give pork sausage a miss in baulk also till this trade ceases, as I expect the unsold meat will be covered by a multitude of skins.

If you happen to see Sir Thomas Sutherland, the taipan of the P. & O., please tell him that we consider it would be only fair, as he has taken away our pork, for him to send us some English pork in the refrigerating chambers on the return journey. The exchange will suit us admirably, and we will cheerfully pay the extra cost. We also have some ducks and geese which we shall be glad to exchange in the same way for some of your farm-fed stock, also some fish. Any other of our foodstuffs you may fancy from time to time, don't hesitate to ask for, and so far as Shanghai is concerned, you are welcome—upon the same terms.

There is talk of increasing the Customs duties. An increase in the Customs duties will

also mean an increase in the cost of living. Indirectly nearly everything we spend in Shanghai comes from the Chinese. We earn it from them, and they steal back as much of it as they can. In some cases, of course, this process is reversed, but not often, and even when it is, we know much more law than they do, and the law, in my humble opinion, isn't such an "hass" as many people think, especially when invoked by a clever man who is determined to wriggle out of paying his just debts.

This being the case, if living requires more money, the money must come from the Chinese ; otherwise it will not be worth our while to stop. We shall then be forced to retire from the field, and help some other country to develop its resources so that there will be the necessary money to pay us for doing the job.

If the Chinese increase the Customs duties, they will certainly apply the bulk of the proceeds to building a navy. When they have a strong navy they will want to fight. When they fight they will have to have some one to fight with, at least for as long as their navy will last, and the question then arises, with whom are they going to fight?

By the time Dr. Sun Yat Sen gets through

with his modest programme, however, and the forthcoming renewal of the Russo-Japanese War is an accomplished fact, it would seem that there will be no lack of employment for the man behind the gun in China.

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. XXI

MY DEAR FATHER,—

At the time of writing we are at the very top-notch of the thermometer. If the mercury climbs any higher, something will break, and we shall begin to burn. I have tried everything I can think of to keep cool. The bulk of my wearing apparel is discarded, and if I shed any more I shall certainly be arrested. Oh, to be a woman or a Chinaman till the end of September, and not have to worry about keeping oneself covered up!

I believe one feels the heat here more than in any other city in the world, yet the people follow their ordinary occupations, eat roast beef and steak and kidney pudding, go to office during the heat of the day in linen collars, play tennis, get married, and conduct themselves generally as if this were London in May.

Last Thursday I met George Lassing, who was passing through to Japan. He came



"NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT KEEPING ONESELF COVERED UP."

ashore in evening dress and a single collar, and I showed him round. After we had seen all that was worth seeing, and a lot that wasn't, he was a limp wreck ; his collar lay down on his coat like an "Eton," and his shirt front resembled a dish-cloth. Going off to his ship in a sampan, he said :

"And you live here, eh, Denby?"

"I do," I replied.

"Why?"

I thought hard for two minutes, but had to confess in the end that I didn't know the answer, and I've thought since, but I haven't got it yet. I must confess that I, personally, feel that the attraction is less since the rubber boom collapsed and the Russo-Japanese War came to an end.

It is particularly rough on a man living in a place like this and having hosts of friends who look him up at short intervals whilst they are travelling round the world.

You have to show them round, and at about 3 a.m. they ask you where you propose to spend the rest of the evening. They can lie back the next morning and sleep, but you have to work all day, holding your throbbing head and trying to remember how you managed to spend the best part of a month's salary in about eight

hours, and where you lost the left tail of your dress coat.

It is a mistaken idea to suppose that the East—even if the birthplace of original sin—still allows it greater freedom than the West ; yet such is the idea of most male tourists, and they insist upon dragging you out to show them your local dissipations.

What desperate efforts we do make to beautify our iniquities with the rosy glow of wine ! Yet we invariably come back to our early morning gallop in the fresh, sweet air, or our before breakfast swim, and thus realize that the world is a beautiful garden in which to stand with one's arms upstretched to the sun and shout for the joy of health.

But again, if we never had a wild night or a headache, and had never been bored to semi-consciousness by vacuous remarks, or suffered in powerless sympathy with the strained, pathetic gaiety of tired women with unhealthy eyes and drawn, painted cheeks, perchance our sombre contrast would no longer throw up the really beautiful into sharp relief—and we have such short memories.

Perhaps my moodiness is partly accounted for by the fact that I am suffering from the after-effects of a Chinese dinner, or chow-chow.

I have attended a big dinner at home, and felt bilious next day, but after this Chinese horror I feel that I shall notice the effects for the rest of my life. No foreign medicine can cope with the mass of garbage, both cooked and raw, that I was compelled to swallow.

My companion who induced me to attend this function is a well-known business man, and it was necessary for him to attend for business reasons. I think myself, looking back upon what occurred, that he had made a lot of money out of his Chinese host, and that the Chinaman was having his revenge. Of course you will say, "Why did you not give every dish a miss in baulk?" I will explain.

The man who accompanied me impressed me with the fact that the dinner cost a lot of money, and that it was very uncomplimentary to the host not to eat. That is where they have you, and that is why I have a mouth like the waste-pipe of a kitchen sink, and see airballs every time I look at the sky.

The initial horror of the affair was encountered on the way to the restaurant. We started along Nanking Road in 'rickshas, and I had visions of going to a Chinese garden, sitting out under the stars, absorbing local colour, enjoying quaint dishes, and generally

making a nodding acquaintance with some of the mysteries of the East about which I could, in after-life, lie fearlessly to my friends at home.

The first disillusion occurred when we were half way along Nanking Road, where my 'ricksha, following my companion's, turned down a narrow, noisy, dirty little street.

"Hi!" I shouted after him, "where on earth are you going?"

"It's all right," he replied over his shoulder.

"All right!" I yelled, with my handkerchief to my nose, "you surely don't mean to try and get me to *eat* anything down this sewer?"

"It's better further along," he replied, and with this I was forced to be content.

Each narrow street in a Chinese district is characterized by its own smell, which is lidded in by overhanging roofs from opposite buildings and confined by huge, hanging signs slung cross-wise. Each portion of that street has its own characteristic variation on the main scheme of stink, like divisions in a Neapolitan ice.

The local inhabitants do not require or cultivate any sense of direction: they find their way about from earliest infancy by the sense of smell.

Eventually, after going about a mile through an atmosphere which reminded me of the back

staircase of a half-crown Soho restaurant at dinner-time, and that would be a paradise to any one interested in the theory of germs, we stopped opposite a building having more gold paint, carving, and dirt upon it than any I had previously seen. We entered, and my companion handed the attendant two slips of paper with Chinese characters upon them. The attendant then bowed, shook hands with himself, and showed us inside.

A Chinaman probably shakes hands with himself because he is the only person he knows that he can be thoroughly sure of.

We passed through a stone courtyard where they store the vegetables that have gone bad (nothing is ever thrown away here) and upstairs into the front room. There we found four Chinese who appeared delighted to see us, and were very polite and very, very greasy.

After eating some nuts and seeds that you have to crack with your teeth—though why, I fail to see, since there is nothing inside them—we sat down at the table.

In the centre were dishes containing shelled pigeon's eggs swimming in some stuff I cannot be sure of, but fancy must have been vaseline ; little cubes of pork surrounded by what appeared to be chickweed, and other delicacies



"A CHINAMAN PROBABLY SHAKES HANDS WITH HIMSELF BECAUSE HE IS THE ONLY PERSON HE KNOWS THAT HE CAN BE THOROUGHLY SURE OF."

I cannot even guess at. One dish, however, caught my eye and held it. Lying right in the middle of the table, surrounded by stewed grasshoppers, were some eggs cut in half, with black yolks. I asked my companion why they dyed their eggs.

"Dyed?" he replied; "those aren't dyed, the colour comes with age."

"But what are they here for?" I enquired.

"The Chinese eat them."

Something turned over in my stomach, and I had to grip the chair.

"Good-night," I said, and was half way out of my seat before he could stop me; but it was useless. He begged me, for the sake of our friendship, to resume my place. I asked him whether he had considered our friendship when he invited me to this culinary practical joke, but he excused himself upon the plea that he thought I should be interested. I told him that I might be interested if I didn't feel so damnably sick, and he advised me to try to think of something else, but I couldn't—those eggs, lying there naked and shamelessly exposed, fascinated me.

To make matters worse, just at that moment a Chinese stretched out a claw with two sticks held in the talons and gripped the most

disgusting egg on the dish. I shut my eyes and counted twenty. The Chinaman on my left must have noticed something, for he explained that many foreigners wondered why they kept their eggs to a ripe old age, and yet they—the foreigners—ate cheese in an advanced stage of decomposition. I explained that cheese was cheese always, but that eggs, after the copyright expired, became a public nuisance ; yet he couldn't see the point somehow.

He argued that an egg, after it had died, stunk with all its might for a few months, and then resumed its odourless state from sheer exhaustion and became beautiful once again ; whereas cheese gathered strength and energy to stink with a continually increasing violence as time elapsed.

What is the use of arguing with a benighted savage like that?

And again, he is quite right ; so I smiled in a superior way and changed the subject, trusting to luck that he would think I had several other arguments with which to confound him, but mercifully refrained from using them out of politeness.

The next course consisted of a brown ball of something in a little dish, surrounded by a lot of green something else. I was about to

take the brown thing, drop it on the floor and put my foot on it, when I caught the host's eyes fixed on me, so I had to put the stuff in my mouth. Then I bit it. It was pure pork fat !

When I recovered consciousness, a man was bringing round what I at first took to be about seven pounds of steaming tripe in his hands, seeing which I staggered to my feet, determined to fight my way out if necessary, but to my unspeakable relief it turned out to be a bunch of hot, wet towels. Each man took one and wiped his face. This would be a splendid custom to introduce into Europe—for the men—and is very refreshing ; but I couldn't help wondering who had been using mine before my turn came.

During the dinner they gave us Chinese wine. It is served in special metal cups, probably because it would corrode ordinary glass. The flavour is somewhat similar to that of mixed crude petroleum and petrol, but is far more potent, and tastes like one of those buzzy things the dentists use to take the tartar off your teeth.

After the others had finished eating, six sing-song girls made their appearance ; for the custom here is for a diner to send for one of



"ALL BEAUTIFULLY DRESSED."

these entertainers after dinner to sing to him. They have their "amahs" (or duennas) with them, and one or two musicians.

They were all beautifully dressed in elaborate flowered-satin coats, and mine wore pink silk trousers trimmed with frilling, but her face was one of the most careless pieces of work I have ever seen. I felt convinced that had I dug my finger into her cheek the impress would remain as in dough, and longed to make the experiment.

All had small feet, the result of tightly binding them in linen from babyhood, which had the effect of making them walk like automatic dolls ; for their feet are mere stumps, without muscular play.

Seeing a small-footed woman walk always gives me that creepy feeling of the skin which one associates with shrimps crawling up one's spine, for I cannot disabuse my mind of the impression that every step causes her pain ; though, of course, such is not the case.

I turned to the moon-faced maiden who had taken up her position on a stool behind my chair, and was about to ask her whether she had been to any dances lately, or engage her in some equally inane conversation such as is expected of one on these occasions, when she looked me



"SMALL FEET."

squarely in the eye, made a horrible face, and let out a yell that detached a piece of plaster from the ceiling, which fell to the floor with a crash.

Jumping from my seat, I yelled to my friend to get some brandy.

"What do you want brandy for?" he screamed.

"Look!" I shouted, pointing to the girl, "she's got some female complaint, and got it badly."

"Don't be an ass," he roared, "she's singing"; and glancing around at my fellow-guests, I was astonished to observe that they listened to her hysterical screams unmoved—nay, if anything, they appeared to enjoy them.

That was my first experience of Chinese vocal music. It is worse than a gramophone.

The Chinese each held the left hand of one of these apparitions and smiled a beatific smile.

At irregular intervals, and without the slightest warning, one of them would let out a screech like a girl who has found a beetle in her bed. I held the bejewelled fore-limb of the lady who had overstrained her pharynx under the misapprehension that she was entertaining me, and wondered, not without some trepidation, what was going to happen next; but I couldn't smile,

because I was uncertain whether I was going to be ill again.

However, even a Chinese dinner comes to an end, and I eventually returned home and wrote a letter to the man who had invited me, telling him I should hold him responsible if anything serious happened to me, and asking him to be kind enough to keep out of my way for a week.

How I envy you your week ends up the river, with a lobster salad, a bottle of bubbly, and a fruit salad off the ice !

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

No. XXII

MY DEAR FATHER,—

Your question as to the management of the affairs of this town is easily answered. There are no politics here except those of an international character, which probably accounts for the excellent way the ratepayers' interests are looked after in the town itself.

The Municipal Council is composed of men who appear to be intimately acquainted with every wickedness of which the human mind is capable ; for they guard against lawlessness with an ingenuity only possible to those of ripe experience.

Of course, this only shows what keen observers they are ; no one would suggest that they have been wicked themselves.

For the services they render the town, they do not, I understand, receive payment—though one of their number has recently been awarded four months' imprisonment—neither are they knighted, but on the other hand they are slanged

sufficiently to satisfy even the most ambitious politician.

The opinion of the ratepayers is obtained at the annual ratepayers' meeting from those who are not there. This opinion, thus obtained, is acted upon for the rest of the year by the Council so far as they consider advisable, if it meets with the approval of the Consular Body.

The Consular Body is a mysterious power that dwells in Shanghai, and everything we do here has to meet with its approval. It is called the Consular Body because Consuls do not need any minds. Consuls who have minds almost invariably get into trouble with their Foreign Office. Foreign Offices of any nationality, as you are aware, deal only with tabulated forms and precedent, and strongly object to being worried ; so the home officials employ bodies for work abroad to fill in the forms that have been in use for centuries.

Ratepayers who pay less than 50 taels per annum are not allowed to vote, but men who bought land which has advanced in value by reason of other people's work are entitled to several votes, in order to enable them to keep the people who did the work in their proper place, and teach them to regard property and money with that respect and veneration which

is its due—when it is in the possession of those who frame the laws.

When you have made sufficient money here out of the men who are unable to pay more than 50 taels per annum in rates because you have taken most of their ready cash, you can go home and leave your power to vote with a good old crusted taipan, instructing him to plump against every alteration which may imperil your interests.

Thus the government of the settlement has passed into the hands of a few men who represent the “best business interests,” that is to say, a few of the old-established hong or firms whose innate modesty and retiring disposition have both been sacrificed to public duty. When you consider the matter you will admit their claim, viz., that the “best business interests” are invariably one’s own interests.

This system has evolved our form of government by the *people* for the PEOPLE.

I must confess that plural voting seems to me a singular way of obtaining the opinion of the majority.

Then there is the Watch Committee. The members of this body go about at night disguised as ordinary people, listen behind doors, and look through keyholes.

The police force is composed principally of Indians, who also supply a great deal of the crime. They are of two castes, viz., Malwais and Manjhas. The force is further recruited from English, Scotch, Irish, and Chinese.

Last Sunday I took a trip up river in a motor-boat, with some ladies, and I have stunk of gasoline ever since. It got in my boots, down my neck, and into my hair. I met one of the ladies yesterday in Nanking Road, and she said : " Ah, Mr. Denby, I didn't recognize you in that sun-hat, but knew it was you directly, by the smell ; how are you? Phew ! "

We went up to a place they call Minghong, but as the staple industry there seems to be the manufacture of smells from fish, we didn't stay long, for we had our own stench with us and couldn't stand any more.

We therefore turned down river a bit and stopped at another and smaller village, where the people make another kind of smell which isn't quite so bad. Here we saw spotted babies with indecorous noses, who wore dirt instead of clothes because they couldn't afford the latter, and screamed " Foreign devil ! " at us. One feels that being a foreign devil has its compensations.

If China has the oldest civilization in the



"THE POLICE FORCE IS COMPOSED PRINCIPALLY OF INDIANS."

world, it is either suffering from senile decay or is in its second childhood. It certainly has never been washed.

When I compared the dainty frills and laces worn by our ladies with the filthy rags and mutilated feet of these poor women, I marvelled at the attitude taken up by the latter. The villagers stared at us for a few moments, and then resumed their occupations, but there was a look about them as much as to say: "You may be better dressed than we are in a kind of way, but after all we are the people that count, and we do not wish to concern ourselves with you."

After a glance at the women in this village, one can only assume that the habit of binding their feet has been forced upon them in order to allow the men to escape when run after by such horrible apparitions.

The Chinese have an extraordinary way of keeping their dead in remembrance. Instead of erecting a stone with a lot of sniffy poetry upon it, they put the corpse in a coffin, which they lay out in the sun near the house. After two or three years the dear departed commences to get thoroughly ripe, and his memory clings round the place and comes stealing in through

every crack and crevice in the walls, unless there happens to be a strong wind the other way.

This is surely the most effective method to adopt in order to ensure a deep and lasting regret for one's death being felt by one's surviving relatives and the surrounding inhabitants generally.

It cannot cost these villagers much to live, but, however little that is, the money is worth far more than the life. I presume that one of these people could live for six months on the price of a bottle of good champagne. If I were given my choice, I would choose the champagne.

Notwithstanding the disadvantages under which their lives are spent, however, our civilization doesn't appear to better them, despite the fact that we do all we can to improve their lot. We sell them millions of cheap cigarettes which smell like a wet dog that has crawled under the stove; they take over most of our Australian horses that have got spavins or stringhalt, and our provisions that were stored too close to the ship's boilers.

We send them missionaries who would do far more good at home, we sell them rifles in

order that they may kill themselves like civilized beings, and build them war ships so that we may have something to sink if we go to war with them. The Municipal Council takes numbers of them in hand, and teaches them useful trades, such as making coconut-fibre matting, road-mending, stone-breaking, &c., and is so considerate as to chain them together in case they might get lost.

We allow them to come into the settlement and trade, spit on the floor of our offices, and give us both aural and ocular demonstrations as to the ridiculous way we waste our money in the purchase of handkerchiefs. We lend them money upon land at the absurdly low rate of 12 per cent., taking upon our own shoulders all the risk of that land being stolen during the night.

We allow them the privilege of mixing socially with our Indian police, and, in short, do all that we can to show them that our aims are not selfish, and yet these ingrates call us "foreign devils."

But maskee ! we will continue the good work in the hope that some day we may be able to save enough to go home and live quietly on two or three thousand a year, with the knowledge that

we have done our best to introduce the blessed gift of civilization into China, and in the hope that its acquisition will be as profitable to them as its disbursement was to us.

Good night.

Your affectionate son,
JIM.

No. XXIII

MY DEAR FATHER,—

At the time of writing, Shanghai is dull,
d—— dull.

Everybody is trying to quench an incredible thirst with a ridiculously inadequate quantity of liquid. The women go down town at 4 p.m., lap up enough ice-cream to give a healthy savage the colic, then come home to dinner, and fix the man who has put in an hour at the Club with a frozen stare conveying icy disapprobation, not to say glacial contempt.

It is so infernally hot, however, that one feels this doesn't matter, even if the women are pretty. Nothing matters. Love may laugh at locksmiths, but he couldn't raise a grin at 99° in the shade, even if we take into consideration his scanty costume. Romeo would never dream of climbing up the balcony even, to say nothing of clasping Juliet in his arms, with the perspiration dripping off his nose, even if Juliet made no objection.

I am continually wondering how it is that the women look so cool during the hot weather. In a crowded tram, one sees several men mopping their faces, but never a woman mopping hers. Of course there are some who dare not do so, but women are not all at this disadvantage, and they certainly cannot be always full of ice-cream.

The openwork season is now in full swing in Shanghai. One is told that the women undress in openwork in order to keep cool; anyhow, there is no doubt that the men have to look the other way in order to do likewise. Shanghai openwork is the openest there is.

One woman who uses the Bubbling Well cars every day dresses in a halo, a devout demeanour, and nine pieces of knotted thread. Whenever that woman enters a car in which I happen to be, I fidget. I simply cannot help doing so. I try my best to keep my eyes on the advertisements on the roof, but without avail. I know it is rude to take advantage of her intermittent decency, because I am convinced by the look on her face that she doesn't mean it—at least not in that way. Understand? But it is quite useless; I've got to look or burst. There is a kind of fascination about it. I feel that if any of those threads carried away I should

scream, and I cannot help looking to ascertain whether they have. If women wear openwork in order to keep cool, they should have some consideration for others. It makes me perspire with fright—a kind of nameless dread. But I don't believe they do. By and by I will ask one of them.

I note that in your letter to hand you enquire about the state of trade. I must confess that I am sorry you do so, as the subject is just now a painful one. There are at present too many here to make a living out of the commerce available, and there is insufficient money to go round. This means that there are several unable to square up. Shanghai is passing through a crisis far more serious than most people imagine.

It must be borne in mind that Shanghai is not a place where a foreigner can live cheaply. Of course there are foreigners and foreigners. Again there are semi-foreigners, and to go still further there are people that can only be described as highly complicated accidents. I am dealing with the foreigner proper, who came into the world with a proof of parental good conduct in the form of a pass-in check, signed, sealed, and delivered by Mrs. Grundy in the domestic bliss department of the Registrar's office.

During bad times a Chinaman can live with

comfort upon flatulence and hope, but the foreigner exists upon I O U's, which in this connection are a financial form of galloping consumption. Hence, hard times in Shanghai are very hard—in the end—for the foreigner.

Despite the depression, however, it is our duty to talk cheerfully about the good times coming, and smile like the Cheshire Cat in "Alice in Wonderland," even if one is in a similar position to the cat in question, who had a smile that was prejaugulent, but nothing to hang it on except a tree.

There are plenty here like this cat, except for the fact that they don't smile, which is a mistake.

Many thanks for your suggestion advising me to get married. With all due respect, I must point out that I can only regard the matter in two ways. If you increase my allowance to enable me to support a wife, as you suggest, there will be no necessity for me to marry, for I can afford to remain a bachelor, and if you don't, I can't marry anyhow, since I positively could not live with a woman who dressed economically.

It is in my opinion quite useless for a man to "make up his mind to marry and settle down," the whole business being accidental and

unavoidable, just like earthquakes, floods, typhoid, hydrophobia, and going to heaven.

“The voice that breathed o’er Eden” was, when you come to regard it in the cold grey dawn of common sense, the vice that breathed o’er Eden, and scorched nearly all the beauty out of the garden, leaving us only the salvage.

There is enough glamour and sentiment brought to bear upon the subject of matrimony by women who have only the business of marriage open to them, and those who are too old to be in a position to satisfy themselves that there is nothing in it, to lead one to imagine that the ceremony of rice and prudes is the crowning-point and reward of a sinless and soda-water youth.

I know several married pairs, also several married odd ones, and the proportion of lucky ones in my own particular circle is one in five. Now all these husbands are delightful fellows—to me ; and the wives—well, really, nothing I could say would convey the sense of how nice they are to every one — except perhaps their husbands. Like enough this is explained by the fact that the husband knows exactly what kind of stockings his wife has on, because he saw them laid out for her wear.

Oh, the dreariness of living with a satisfied

curiosity ! Does not the average man require the goad of novelty ?

It is admitted that it isn't what a girl really is that a man falls in love with, but what he thinks she is. When he finds out what she actually is, he hides his hopeless boredom in baggy trousers, doubtful collars, earthquake-pattern ties, and other abominable signs of a destitute ambition.

For instance, there are only two kinds of men who wear a collar for two days, viz. : those who don't know any better and those who do. All the latter are married.

Not that I have a word to say against women, for in my humble way, as you know, from a housemaid to a duchess (provided of course that they are both clean), I am one of their most sincere admirers ; but I admire them plurally only, and, like oysters, violets, and collars, prefer them fresh every day. No, sir, even if I were to meet some poor girl idiotic enough to marry me, I could never, never enter the bonds because—Well, to start with, Gladys wouldn't like it, and if I married any other woman I could never look her in the face again.

By the way, if you could induce *her* to come out here now—for of course she is altogether different from the others.

I ask you : Is there another girl with hair like hers, or deep-coloured eyes that change so that you think each expression is the most beautiful, till you see the next? And her figure ! The foot and ankle of her ! Help ! Do you think it any use going round to see her and asking her to come out? If you succeed, I'll pay you all the money I owe you, and marry, and settle down, and everything.

You may say, why don't I write and ask her myself?

I did, three months ago, but have received no reply to date. The person who quotes the saying " Silence gives consent " has never in his salad days written to a popular actress asking for an appointment after the show, or heard the reply to his wife's solicitous enquiry, " Is that you, John? " given by the husband who—creeping upstairs at 3 a.m.—slips upon a piece of wet soap left on the top step by a careless housemaid.

Not that it is fair to ask Gladys to change the society of Roehampton for that of Shanghai, for, to tell you the candid truth, there is only one good point about Shanghai society, and that good point is that it is unnecessary to concern oneself with it.

Shanghai is cursed with two evils that Gladys

could never tolerate, viz., mosquitoes and snobs. The mosquitoes appear during four months of the year, but the snobs are always in season. They are, like the mosquitoes, of two sexes, and, like mosquitoes, the female is the more poisonous.

One sees women here, not yet thoroughly clear of either housemaid's knee or capped elbow, driving about in carriages and cultivating a painful accent which they fondly imagine, in their triple-expansion ignorance, is a sign of "cultcha."

These are the people who complain that Shanghai is full of cliques. Were it not for the cliques, there is no doubt that Shanghai would be impossible altogether.

I was obliged to attend a snob dinner last week, and am prepared to swear that it compared very unfavourably with a visit to the dentist.

The utmost formality was observed, and the host wore blacking-leather boots with his evening dress. The only thing decently dressed was the salad, and even that appeared to have spent the night under the cook's bed, instead of being crisped up in the ice chest.

The host is a self-made man, and appears to have made a deuce of a mess of it. Nature moulded him as a bricklayer's labourer, and his

attempt to remodel himself to the standard of gentility is successful merely as a burlesque.

During the *hors d'œuvres*, which consisted of sardines of doubtful vintage and fresh tomatoes (which latter are, I am given to understand, grown under circumstances of the greatest indelicacy, and at which I consequently shied violently), our host, in a loud voice and with a patronizing manner, desired my opinion of his wine. The aperient to which he referred was decanted into a claret jug, but I saw the two empty bottles over against the sideboard.

Any one who imbibed more than half a bottle would be either a hero or an idiot.

"Ever see such a colour before?" enquired our host, holding a glass of the purple purgative up to the light. "Never!" I replied with decision. "There's a wine!" asserted our host. "Where?" I enquired hopefully, looking round the room. This at \$5.00 a dozen and find your own medicine!

There is a great deal of sickness here amongst new arrivals, and this fact is attributed to the water, which drains off the low-lying land into the creeks, carrying filth with it. These creeks never drain properly, as I have already explained to you in my description of the yellow line of river water at the mouth of the Whangpoo, which line never breaks up.

Seeing, then, that the water is the main cause of disease, it is characteristic of the "maskee" attitude of the inhabitants that no scheme has been tried whereby this essential could be supplied to the town from an up-country source where the quality is better. I understand there are several places within easy reach, and that we shouldn't have to go half as far for our supply as several European towns of half our size wisely consider it advisable to do.

Of course, in the good old prosperous days, when foreigners were few and could take things easily (and take a devil of a lot too), the only thing that was drunk was the foreigners.

Nowadays the foreigners cannot afford to get drunk, so they read the analysis of the Shanghai Water Company's water that is published in the *Municipal Gazette*, see how absolutely safe it is, drink it, and get typhoid.

Taking it all in all, however, joking and persiflage apart, Shanghai is a healthy town, populated by merry, sporting, straight-riding, hard-living men, willing to stake their last cent on a turn of fortune's wheel and smilingly light a cigarette if they lose. The women enter into the spirit of the thing, and spare no pains to make the life of an exile enjoyable—in which they succeed handsomely.

The International and French settlements are the windows through which the light of Western learning will penetrate and show up the dirt in the dark corners of China's ill-managed house. Speaking collectively, the foreigners in Shanghai, as in Hongkong and the other settlements, are as competent to set about the task of cleaning up China's Augean stable as any that could well be selected. If they charge a substantial fee they are fully justified in doing so, for the money is well earned, and the work sufficiently heavy to cause even a Hercules to pause and wonder whether the accomplishment of so gigantic a task falls within the scope of human effort.

The town is particularly unsuitable as a dumping-ground for men who cannot "get on" elsewhere, however, for the East makes no provision for the failures of other lands, and neither Shanghai nor Hongkong—being each busy with its own affairs—desires to be put to the trouble and expense of shipping back whence they came men for whom there is no room.

To the pioneers who risked their all in the days when one travelled to China by sailing ship—the "old China hands"—be all honour and glory, for though most of them have gone the way of all flesh, there stands a magnificent town, whose trade is reckoned in millions, to per-

petuate their memory—a fitting monument indeed ! Let us hope their splendid work will ever be carried on toward its destined fulfilment by men as worthy, with hearts as bold.

Good luck, long life, and happiness to Shanghai, the bright little town which has so long sheltered

Your affectionate son,

JIM.

THE GRIFFIN

WILLIAM LANGLEY, JUNR., was a boy that got on well with every one. There was a certain indefinable fascination about him. Some observant person, noticing his striking resemblance to Du Maurier's sketches of Little Billie in "Trilby," applied the name to him, and being extremely apt, it stuck, so that he was known by this appellation ever after. There was something about Little Billie that appealed with irresistible power to women. The one woman who was affected more, I believe, than any other by this peculiarity of Little Billie was his own mother.

Little Billie's mother had been brought up amidst surroundings where everything coarse was rigorously excluded. The real world was, therefore, unknown to her. Her parents acted as censors until she was of age, and at her maturity handed over the task to a youth who, after endless observation and tests, proved himself a clean-living man suitable to carry on the work.

When the trust was handed over to Little

Billie's father, he was given to understand that the condition was that he kept his wife out of sight and hearing of that seamy side of human nature which is only thoroughly understood by the very poor, from necessity, and by some of the very rich, from choice.

Little Billie's father had a veneration for women which was fostered and strengthened by the companionship of his wife, but he was a strong man who looked out over the world with clear eyes, and understood it. He therefore realized that Billie would either have to go abroad out of the reach of the influence of his mother's teaching, or start life with a pathetic trust in human nature that must inevitably be abused.

He knew that Little Billie's mother gave their son impressions of life that were never questioned, and that those impressions were beautiful ideals which had no more reality in them than the transformation scene of a pantomime. I think myself his greatest dread at this time was that Little Billie's mother should be with the boy when he grew tall enough to see over the wall of the garden of idealism in which she had hitherto succeeded in keeping him confined.

So it came about that Little Billie, with his

curly golden hair, his pink and white cheeks, his pathetic trust in the underlying goodness of all things, far too much money, an endless stock of good resolutions, and three trunks packed full of Jaeger underwear, cholera belts, and beautiful Irish linen, stepped off the P. & O. tender *Gutzlaff* one evening in September and registered at the Palace Hotel in Shanghai.

The first evening he spent in the hotel reading-room. Next day he presented his letters of recommendation to three leading business men, who gave him some really excellent advice, not knowing that he was already overstocked with that commodity ; but what was of more importance, one of them offered him a position, which he accepted with profuse thanks.

During the first few weeks his life was sufficiently interesting owing to the novelty of his surroundings, but as time wore on he found the hours drag with dull monotony at night, because he had nowhere to go. He could get through fairly well up to dinner-time, but after that meal he became more and more weighed down by a feeling of irritation and boredom—a sense that his life was lacking in some important particular, but just what it was that he was short of, he couldn't think. It never occurred to him that the fact of his home-life having been a constant

exchange of impressions and sympathy with a sweet-faced old lady, whose mind was a garden of beautiful things wherein nothing mean or ugly had ever been allowed to enter, had anything to do with it.

Little Billie, at this time, didn't know a woman in the town, but this state of affairs was altered very shortly by his meeting, and being introduced to, Mrs. Hazleton.

Mrs. Hazleton was a woman over thirty-eight years of age. She spent most of her time trying to forget and to disguise that fact. She had an excitable, excitement-craving nature, an artistic temperament with a kink in it, and a husband who tried his best to forget her and to think of something nice.

Not but that Mrs. Hazleton could be charming when she chose, as instance the way she fascinated the man she married, but it is equally certain that the effect was not lasting, when we consider the undoubted fact that Mr. Hazleton ever after devoutly wished that she hadn't.

Mrs. Hazleton was a connoisseur of men, and when she saw Billie, she patted her hair at the sides, ironed her dress down over her hips with the palms of her hands, and swore that something interesting should happen. It did.

Little Billie was charmed. How he talked,

and talked ! bringing out all the ideas he had perforce bottled up for months, and how beautifully Mrs. Hazleton listened to be sure ! only interjecting an occasional " Oh, do go on ! " and every now and then a questioning " Yes ? " as she bent over to him with her elbows on her knees and looked right into his eyes. Mrs. Hazleton had beautiful shoulders.

Before long Little Billie was telling her all about his home life, and she was getting more and more interested, not, as Little Billie thought, of course, in what he was saying, because she took very little notice of it, but she was getting very interested indeed in Little Billie.

After this meeting came several dinners *en famille*, and eventually, one night when Billie was invited, Mr. Hazleton didn't turn up. There was nothing surprising in this, because he was in Hongkong on business. When Little Billie discovered that Mr. Hazleton was not coming home, he suggested that he should go ; but his eyes questioned those of his hostess nevertheless ; because Mrs. Hazleton was one of those women who can convey a world of suggestion without speech or even definable gesture.

" Do you want to go, Billie ? " Mrs. Hazleton asked.

"No," admitted Billie, "but I believe I ought to."

"Let's pretend we don't care about what we ought to do."

Billie looked up quickly.

"And——?"

"Why, then we shan't have to do it," and Mrs. Hazleton looked down, because Billie's eyes seemed to be looking right into her mind, and Mrs. Hazleton didn't want him to read her as she was, her desire being that he should read her as she wanted him to think she was.

So Little Billie stayed to dinner, drank champagne, and sat out on the verandah over the coffee. As luck would have it, too, there was a moon. Now, good champagne, a charming woman, and a full moon, after months of loneliness, form a combination under which it is difficult for a man to talk generalities. Add to this the fact that the woman is craving for excitement long denied, and this is the only excuse there was for Billie's going home at two o'clock next morning with his head on fire, after making the startling discovery that there was only one thing in the world of real importance, and that was to find out new ways of being good to Mrs. Hazleton.

Of course, Billie knew he was doing wrong,

and he might have got through the evening with no more harm than that which results from the excitement of playing with fire (which, by the way, was Mrs. Hazleton's favourite pastime), had it not been for the fact that she claimed his confidence, bound him to secrecy, and then told him how she was neglected, misunderstood, and made desperate by her husband's indifference when her nature craved for love. Billie listened with a white face, and felt horribly uncomfortable until he saw she was crying, and then he lost his head, and said things—well, just as Mrs. Hazleton intended he should.

There followed a few weeks of excitement, secret meetings, and extravagant promises, after the lapse of which time Little Billie was surprised that his heretofore keen enjoyment of the situation began to fade.

This was really because Mrs. Hazleton was beginning to tire of it herself; but Billie didn't know this, so, thinking the fault his, he renewed his attentions, with the result that Mrs. Hazleton commenced to be bored by them; their meetings became farther and farther apart, and finally ceased altogether.

So Mrs. Hazleton resumed the uneven tenor of her way, but not so Little Billie. He tried hard, but it was no use. He still had the

feeling that his life was lacking in some important particular, and the sense of incompleteness was now stronger than ever. There was something inside him now that he never noticed before, continually craving for excitement. This he felt more particularly when he tried to sit down in the evening to read.

So Little Billie took to "getting about more." He met men who took him to places where he could satisfy his craving for life and movement at an exorbitant price. Little Billie could now be seen nearly every night, and far into the morning, at places where the fare provided was frightfully expensive and ineffably dull, but well advertised by a reputation for wickedness.

He tired of these places, however, even more quickly than he had tired of Mrs. Hazleton; but there was one after-effect left when he gave up trying to find something in these places which wasn't there, and that was the discovery that a few extra drinks had the effect of giving him a more cheerful outlook over the world, and enabled him to get through the evening.

It was now three and a half years since Little Billie came out from home, and one morning the head of the firm he served sent for him.

"Oh, Mr. Langley," said he, as Little Billie

entered the private office, "I have sent for you to enquire whether you would care to go home for six months' leave. It does every one good to get a run home, and I think, nay, I am sure, that you need it," and the head of the firm looked at Little Billie keenly.

Little Billie did need it.

"If it is convenient, I should like to," said Little Billie.

"Very well, we will consider it settled," and the taipan sat down and wrote a private letter to Mr. Langley, senior, in England, which Little Billie has not seen or heard about even to this day.

So Billie went home on the same ship that brought him out three and a half years before.

His father came to meet him, and looked at Little Billie searchingly as he shook hands.

"How's mother?" enquired Billie, with a light in his eyes that hadn't been there for quite a while.

"Fine."

"And you?"

"Grand; but you don't look very bright, Billie."

"No," said Billie, "the climate there isn't like this, you know," and he tried to laugh, but something caught his throat.

"Billie."

"Yes."

"I want you to tell me how you got on, what you did, and how you lived out there."

"Must I?" said Billie.

"I want you to."

So Billie told him, and kept nothing back, because he felt like a little boy again, and the telling took so long that they were at the home station before he had quite finished.

"Let's hurry home and see mother," said Billie's father, "and I don't think I would tell her as much as you have told me, Billie; you see, she——"

"Don't!" interrupted Billie piteously, "I understand."

"And about going back; do you want to go out again?"

Little Billie thrust out his lower jaw and straightened himself, but an irresistible impulse made him glance at his father's face. Something he saw there made him take his father's arm and keep silent.

"What do you say if we leave that part of it to mother?" said Little Billie's father.

"If *you* don't mind," said Billie.

Little Billie didn't go back to Shanghai.

A QUESTION OF METHOD

"IF," said Dorothy, "you are, as you say, in love with me, why don't you ask me to marry you?"

"Because," I replied thoughtfully, "I am convinced you would accept."

"And——?"

"In the present state of our feelings it would be unwise to decide, because we are not in a position to give the matter that unprejudiced consideration that so important a subject requires."

"You take it for granted that I should accept you," and Dorothy looked almost dangerous.

"I should make it my business," I admitted humbly, "to see that you did."

"So that you are of the opinion that if, for the sake of argument, we were to marry now, we should repent."

"Well, look at the D'Arcys. Look at any

couple—I beg your pardon, look at any man who has charged into matrimony with the impetus, the—electro-magnetism of sentiment shown by *any* man in love—really in love, mark you!—and what has been the result in the majority of cases? ”

“ There are,” asserted Dorothy, “ several happy couples.”

“ Where? ” I questioned.

Dorothy waved her hand vaguely.

“ All over the shop,” she said.

“ If you intend to treat this matter with levity,” I objected, “ I——”

“ When you are in this mood,” she asserted, “ your gravity is too ponderous ; it requires treating with levity, or else you would depress me,” and Dorothy yawned shamelessly.

“ You see, if I married, I should consider it far safer to wed a girl who wasn’t in love with me.”

“ You surely don’t imagine that *I’m* in love with you? ” and Dorothy opened her eyes very wide.

“ I know you *are*,” I said with conviction.

I knew that would make her sit up.

“ May I ask why you imagine so vain a thing? ”

“ Because you always pretend not to see me

when I come into a room where you are, talk almost incredible piffle to any one who will listen, and when I talk to you, you yawn, but it isn't a real yawn at all ; just a feminine method of trying to hide your true feelings, and——”

“Really and truly,” interrupted Dorothy, “you're the most conceited man I ever met ; and how did you know—that is, what made you think I knew you were in the room last Friday at the Wellmores' ? ”

“Because I do just the same myself,” I admitted, “when you come into any room where I happen to be. As for being conceited, I have cause,” I continued, crossing my legs and looking with justifiable pride at my new socks ; “it isn't every one that a girl like you would fall in love with.”

“And why,” asked Dorothy, “in the name of all that's fantastic, do you want to marry a girl with whom you are not in love ? ”

“Pardon me,” I replied, “I did not put it in that way at all. I meant to infer that I should like my love-making after marriage. The interest of the courtship would be intensified to an inestimable extent in the case of a man making love to his own wife. Love-making as a preliminary to the proposal is, you will surely admit, hackneyed, not

to say commonplace and illogical. Besides, think of the additional advantages open to a legitimate husband, the opportunities unhampered by convention, chaperonage, and other feminine wiles——”

“Feminine wiles?”

“Of course: instituted so as to render it impossible for the love-blind courtier to find out the true character of the girl he is trying to get to know. The chaperon is a feminine means of self-protection, carefully thought out to diplomatically counteract the savage idea of courtship by means of a club. Instead of being able to give a girl a tap on the head and take her home whilst unconscious, which, of course, carries the additional advantage of being able to return unsuitable material, the modern man is chaperoned into making a D’Arcy of himself.”

“Consequently,” said Dorothy, “you will not marry a girl with whom you are in love?” and she opened her mouth to yawn, but stopped halfway, and pretended to cough.

“I beg your pardon! I said no such thing.”

“Then I am afraid I haven’t been listening very carefully,” said Dorothy apologetically.

“Oh yes, very indeed,” I replied; “that yawn——”

“I didn’t yawn,” said Dorothy, sitting up

and frowning as much as she could, which wasn't anything to speak of.

"The intention," I submitted meekly, "was there, but the yawn wasn't. If I could get you to admit that you don't love me, there might be some hope of coming to an understanding."

"And if I could get you to admit that you don't love me——?"

"As to that," I admitted, "there is certainly some difficulty; but then again, that difficulty can be overcome, in a sense. You see, I studied the symptoms in the D'Arcy case; that is, of course, the male half of the symptoms, and—— Well, do you consider Mrs. D'Arcy pretty?"

"Pretty?" Dorothy's tone dipped down to the *e*, and then soared up to shrillness on the *y*, "why she's ug—plain, she doesn't know how to dress, she's pin-toed, and——"

"And D'Arcy is in love with her," I interrupted hastily.

"I suppose so."

"Of course he is; he lets her snub him in public, and only smiles."

"Well?"

"Well! there you are!"

"Oh, you—you *germ*; you mean that I might be hideous, and yet——"

"You would still look, to me, the most exquisitely beautiful woman in the world; exactly."

"Which I am not?"

"Heaven and other men alone know."

"So that if I admit that I don't love you any more, without of course admitting that I ever did——?"

"Then I can propose to you without any suspicion of taking an unfair advantage."

"But I really, really don't love you."

"Then it only remains for you to fix the day of the wedding."

Then Dorothy laughed outright, which was, of course, what I wanted. I can do anything with Dorothy when she laughs.

"So that if I say I am not in love with you, you will ask me to marry you?"

"I shall insist upon it. That is just what I have been trying to explain."

"And if I say that I do?" and Dorothy tried to look contemptuous.

"That will be the same, in effect, as your asking me to marry you."

"Really," Dorothy asserted, with some heat, "you make it very difficult for me to refuse you."

"That," I admitted candidly, "is my object."

"Your methods of courtship," said Dorothy, "are not such as appeal to me a bit."

"I submit," I replied, "that you are not in a position to judge."

"Oh, then you are not——"

"Certainly not. I am doing my best not to make love to you, I——"

"You are succeeding admirably," interrupted Dorothy, rising and going over to the fireplace, but turning her ear in my direction.

"Because," I continued, "I do not consider that I am in a fit state to decide upon so difficult a question as matrimony."

"But you don't have to decide ; it's me," objected Dorothy ungrammatically, as she stamped her foot.

"Supposing," I said, "just for the sake of argument, that I admit the truth of that statement? "

"Then I should immediately lodge a protest against your methods of courtship."

"In that case," I admitted, "it might be necessary to change the method, as you insist upon it."

"I didn't," said Dorothy indignantly, "but I am sure it couldn't be worse than this, anyhow."

"Much more dangerous," I warned her.

"Pooh!" said Dorothy, tossing her head—
"I am not afraid, I assure you."

"All right," I said, "let's."

"Yes, let's," agreed Dorothy shyly.

So we did.

BAGGS AND BASKETS

PETER BAGGS, master of the China Coast Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Hang Yu*, sat up suddenly in his chair with a look of alarm on his weather-beaten face, and glanced across at his daughter Betty. "What's that? The doctor has ordered you to go on a voyage, eh? Sea air, eh? Did he say who was to take you, and look after you, and who was to see to this house while you're away?"

Peter was a widower, and his nineteen-year-old daughter had just recovered from an attack of typhoid fever.

"I really think, father, that the trip would be the cheaper way in the end; these marble monuments are so terribly expensive just n——"

"D—don't catch any one up so quick now! Who said you couldn't go?" hastily interrupted the captain. "I said, 'Who is to take you?' As

to the house, why, your being away will make precious little difference to *that*."

"I can see no hope of going with any other than yourself, dad. Of course, I needn't see more of you than can be helped."

"The number of things you cannot see, my dear Betty, is positively astounding, prodigious! May I be permitted to point out that my Company does not allow me to take women-folk in any form with me on the ship? which is one of the very few wise orders that my Company does give me. If it were not for this, of course, I would take you next trip."

"Some captains in the China Coast Steam Navigation Company are, I understand, allowed the privilege of buying tickets for a passenger on any ship in the fleet at one dollar per day. Now I wonder whether the Company would allow *you* to do that?"

"Allow!" spluttered the captain, throwing out his chest; "of course they will give me a ticket on those terms if I ask for it, but not for my female—er—encumbrances."

"Oh, well, that settles it," said Betty demurely.

"Settles what?"

"I will go with you next trip under another

name. Fancy ! oh, what fun ! I needn't know you at all. How *lovely!* ”

It must be explained that the captain was in reality not a bad-tempered man at all, for a China Coast skipper, but the responsibility of looking after a pretty daughter, and the uncomfortable knowledge that she invariably got her own way, put him to all kinds of expedients in order to regain the control that he feared he had lost for ever, the latest of his efforts being the affectation of a grumpy ill temper in all his dealings with her.

Through this device, however, his daughter saw clearly, but was at present pretending to take him seriously, believing that if she did so she could shame him into reassuming his complacent manner. Signs of her success were, in fact, already apparent, for twice already in three days he had wavered, and once only just checked himself in time when about to give her a kiss.

In spite of many objections, however, and many remarks of cutting severity from the captain, the picture of a marble monument won the day, and the passage was booked.

By mutual agreement father and daughter were to be complete strangers, which was rendered possible by the fact that both she and her father had kept themselves very much to

themselves, and it was within his knowledge that not one of his shipmates knew his daughter even by sight.

It must be admitted that the captain had been drawn into this arrangement against his better judgment, but his surprise can be imagined when, on taking his seat at the dinner-table in the saloon soon after leaving Woosung, he found his daughter placed on the far side of the chief-engineer, in direct contravention of his orders.

Immediately he had taken his seat, Betty, who appeared to be, by this time, intimately acquainted with everybody at the table with the single exception of himself, skilfully led the conversation up to the subject of parental authority and its abuse, quoting some horrible cases that had come under her notice.

"I trust you will not consider me personal if I venture to enquire whether your own experience has influenced your mind on this subject?" enquired the captain, somewhat sarcastically.

"Oh, no!" Betty hastened to reassure him. "My dad is a darling; there is only one weakness of his that I have to try to overcome, and that, seeing that you do not know him, I may confess is——" here she leaned over

to the skipper and whispered a word in his ear.

"Dear me!" replied the skipper with exaggerated concern, "how very, very sad—er—boy, bring me a whisky and soda—a *large* whisky and a *small* soda."

Having swallowed this with an air of defiant satisfaction, at which his daughter gave vent to a compassionate sigh, he commenced to bolt his food at lightning speed with a view to escape, but was again directly questioned by his dutiful offspring as to whether a seafaring life was more likely than any other calling to spoil the temper, "that is, in your opinion, Captain—er——?"

"B-A-G-G-S, Baggs," barked the skipper.

"Ah!—of course, how silly of me—Captain Baggs. And your opinion?"

"My opinion, young lady, is that it isn't the seafaring life that spoils the temper of sailors, but the—er—continual necessity of answering foolish questions to which they are frequently exposed."

"Oh, what an enormous number you must have had to answer, poor man!" replied Betty, regarding him with a look of such pity and commiseration that in his distraction he flavoured his coffee with a prodigious quantity of salt, to

which action the steward called his attention, and received a scowling reply to the effect that the coffee was so abominable that he preferred to drink it with salt, in which form he professed to prefer it to Carlsbad salts or even castor oil.

The second officer here choked violently and was obliged to leave the table with his serviette to his face, struggling to overcome a fit of coughing, his retreating form being followed by a stony glare from Captain Baggs.

"I presume, from your opinion of sailors," remarked the captain, who was struggling to suppress his impotent wrath, "that your father is a sailor himself?"

"Well, that I hardly know myself." Betty's brows were puckered with doubt. "You see, some say he is, and some say he isn't. One man told me that he thought he was an explorer, for he had found the exact situation of every mud-bank in the Far East, and the darker the night, the more certain he was to find a new one. Rather clever of dad, don't you think?"

But this question remained unanswered, as it was addressed to the captain's broad back, in full retreat as he disappeared through the door.

Now, Captain Baggs was a man who could

take his bottle of whisky a day and carry it without any approach to disaster, but this evening, it must be admitted that, either to soothe his jagged nerves or out of resentment at what he considered his daughter's uncalled-for interference in his alcoholic affairs, he exceeded his usual allowance, and as a direct result a feeling of drowsiness began to creep over him. With a barely perceptible unsteadiness in his gait, he therefore stepped out on deck, with the idea of taking a stroll in the night air to clear his head. He had hardly proceeded ten yards, however, when he came across his daughter and Mr. Mays, the chief-engineer, in earnest conversation, which was being carried on in such low tones as to necessitate their deck-chairs being in the closest possible proximity.

Noticing even in the dim light which prevailed that the captain's bottled-up wrath showed unmistakable signs of finding a vent, his daughter deemed it advisable to remind him of the parts they were both playing, so, before giving him an opportunity to speak, she exclaimed lightly :—

“ Ah, Captain Baggs, not in bed yet? I was just discussing Gyrostatine with Mr. Mays. Do you think it is effective? ”

“ Not knowing what Gyrostatine is, young

lady, I am afraid I have no opinion to offer."

"Never heard of Gyrostatine, Captain Baggs? Why, it is very extensively advertised. It is a tasteless, odourless drug that can be given to heavy drinkers without their knowledge, by mixing it in their food."

"Oh!"

"Mr. Mays doesn't agree with the idea of filling people up with drugs without their knowledge, and I argue that it is our duty to do anything to allay the awful craving that some people have for strong drink."

"I most heartily agree with Mr. Mays, young lady," asserted the captain, beginning to feel an imaginary pain under his waistcoat, "but, of course, you haven't actually tried any of this Gyro stuff on—er—anybody, eh?"

"Oh yes, I have used two bottles already," answered Betty, regarding him wistfully. "But I am afraid I cannot lay claim to any great success."

The captain, who was now quite sure he could feel strange pains all over himself, sent the bo'sun for his cabin-boy and gave orders for two bottles of whisky and half a dozen sodas to be sent to his room.

At this point Betty announced that Mr.

Mays had kindly consented to show her over the ship, and with that rose from her chair, and favoured her infuriated parent with a polite bow of dismissal. But this was the proverbial last straw, and broke the already overburdened back of the captain's patience. Stepping up to his daughter so as to get the chief-engineer at his back, he suggested that she should come with him first and see something he wished to show her in the 'tween decks, favouring her at the same time with such a glare that to avoid trouble she consented.

It was just as they entered the 'tween decks that Betty, catching sight of what appeared to be about thirty large snakes, felt an almost irresistible desire to scream, till a second glance at one that had wriggled itself close to where she was standing satisfied her that they were large eels, a basket of which appeared to have become unfastened, thus allowing the prisoners to escape.

The captain was mentally framing the most sarcastic and biting phrases in which he could make his demands for an explanation and extort a solemn promise of reform, when his eye was arrested by what seemed, without any possibility of doubt, to be a large blue-black snake which was wriggling towards him, followed by a long

train of its fellows, each apparently trying to outdo the other in sinuous contortions by trying to tie itself up into fantastic knots.

When he was convinced by surreptitiously pinching himself that he was awake, Captain Baggs stopped suddenly, looked solemnly upwards to the floor of the deck above, shook himself like a dog, rubbed his eyes, and then slowly allowed his gaze to return to the spot on which he had seen the snake.

It was still there !

Uttering a fretful cough, he next tried the effect of closing first one eye with his hand and then the other ; but the organ of vision that was uncovered invariably sought—and found—snakes : snakes in every curve and contortion possible to conceive, and in addition, in the case of one particular group, they appeared to his excited mind to be performing feats that could only be pronounced, by the normal mind, quite impossible altogether ; which so disturbed his mental balance that with a shudder of fear and horror he turned to his daughter, and, pointing to the wriggling mass in the corner, enquired in a shaky voice, “ W.-what are those ? ”

Betty looked searchingly in the direction of the pile of cargo indicated and replied placidly, “ Baskets.”

"Yes, yes, of course," quaked the skipper impatiently ; "but—er—what else?"

"More baskets."

"Damn the baskets!" shouted her infuriated parent, losing his self-control as he felt his hair begin to stiffen ; "can't you see anything else?"

"Please remember you are not talking to any of your crew," haughtily ; "if there is nothing else there, how can I say there is? Surely——"

"Surely nothing ; I tell you there are *snakes*, thousands and millions of wriggling, writhing, slimy, twisty snakes, and if *you* can't see them, I—O Lord!"

"Oh, dad, I am so sorry! Come along ; let us get out of this ; perhaps you will not see any more when you get outside."

"Yes, but p-perhaps I shall," quavered the now thoroughly frightened skipper, hastily retreating.

On the way to the upper deck Betty was surprised to receive an invitation from the skipper to visit his cabin, upon reaching which, after gazing with great trepidation into every corner, he uttered a sigh of relief, took down from the wall a calendar upon which was depicted a yellow and blue dragon, and threw it

underneath his bunk. Suddenly thinking better of it, however, he retrieved and tore it into fragments, which he carefully placed underneath a large paper-weight. With trembling hands he then pressed two unopened bottles of whisky and one half empty one upon her, and with abject humility implored her to take them under her cloak and drop them overboard, which, nothing loth, she did.

After this incident, Betty, for the remainder of the voyage, was virtually mistress of the ship, having gained which position she treated her subdued parent with unrelaxing firmness.

Two days after the termination of the voyage, the captain, upon coming in to dinner at his home in Haskell Road, punctually at 7 p.m., was astounded to find Mr. Mays, his chief-engineer, seated in an easy chair, with a cigar between his teeth and a contented smile upon his face, while facing him in the corresponding chair was Betty, looking radiant in a new dress which suited her to perfection.

"Evening, Captain Baggs," said the chief, affably; "take my chair," and rising politely he indicated the captain's favourite resting-place with a wave of his hand.

"No, no! don't disturb yourself, I beg," replied the captain icily. "I shall have plenty

of time to use it after you've gone," with which he looked at his watch rather longer than was strictly necessary, and, giving vent to an exclamation of annoyance, stepped smartly across to the mantelpiece and moved the hand of the clock forward fifteen minutes. Observing this, Mr. Mays drew *his* watch from his pocket, and after a casual glance at the dial murmured, "Hum! Early, isn't it? I quite thought it was later."

Betty gave him an appreciative smile. "Time does seem to drag a bit sometimes, doesn't it?" growled the skipper.

"Ah! that's liver," asserted the chief compassionately; "wonderful what an effect bile has on a man's disposition."

"Doubtless you are right," agreed the captain, with a glitter in his eye, "but I have observed that gall is still more notable for its effects."

"Father," interrupted Betty in a dreamy voice of utter content, "Mr. Mays has come to tell—that is, to ask you—I mean—oh, tell him, Leonard, I can't."

"Hem—Captain Baggs," said the chief, going very red in the face, and then very white, "your daughter and I have—er——"

"Agreed to get——" prompted Betty.

“ To ask you whether we may get——” hastily interjected the chief apprehensively.

“ MARRIED ”—both together, with a burst of relief.

“ Married ! ” shouted the captain. “ Why, God bless my soul ! Married, O Lord ! ” Overcome by an emotion too powerful for words, he grasped the chief’s hand in a grip of iron, and with tears which might have been the result of an excess of either joy, sorrow, or boundless gratitude, worked his hand up and down with a violence that made his future son-in-law wince with pain, till, realizing that he had carried his active congratulations to a ridiculous excess, the skipper danced across the room to the mantelpiece again, and put the hand of the clock back half an hour.

The meal that followed was perhaps the happiest that either of the three diners had ever enjoyed, the harmony being only temporarily threatened when, in reply to the captain’s question as to the nature of the second course, his daughter informed him that it consisted of eels, at which Mr. Mays glanced pointedly at his fiancée, and they both burst into fits of laughter.

“ Don’t see anything funny about eels,” remarked the captain, somewhat surprised.

"Baskets," chuckled Mr. Mays.

"'Tween decks," giggled Betty hysterically.

"Damn!" muttered the captain with intense earnestness, as the light of understanding dawned upon him.

THE FOUR POWDERS

A CERTAIN young man, being endowed with a lively disposition, coupled with plenty of money, spent most of his time in the pursuit of pleasure. At first he enjoyed himself immensely with wine, women, and song ; but after a few months he found that unless the wine was of the choicest vintage, and the women were the most beautiful and witty, he could no longer appreciate them, so he indulged only in the very best wine, and sought out none but the most fascinating of the fair sex.

Eventually, however, even the most expensive diversion commenced to pall, so the youth, becoming seriously alarmed, sought out the Wise Man of the East and asked his advice.

Having listened to the symptoms, the Wise Man pronounced the disease a very ordinary one. He informed the youth that he must commence the treatment by ceasing to indulge in

tobacco ; to assist him to attain which object the Wise Man gave him a yellow powder. This powder the youth swallowed, and never again had any desire to smoke.

The tobacco habit being cured, the Wise Man gave the youth a red powder, and instructed him to cease indulging in alcohol in any form. These instructions were, however, quite unnecessary, for the youth found that all wine was now so distasteful that to imbibe it became impossible, and he looked upon every alcoholic drink, in future, with abhorrence.

Having thoroughly eradicated the drink habit, the Wise Man next administered a blue powder, which the youth swallowed before enquiring as to its effect. When he did put the question, however, the Wise Man informed him that his desire for the company of women was now no more.

This the youth could hardly credit, until he went forth into the world and made the discovery that the society of even the most fascinating and beautiful damsel he had ever known and adored in the old days was now distasteful in the extreme.

Upon the occasion of his next visit, the Wise Man congratulated him upon the success of the treatment, "for," said he, "you are now a perfect man, without vice and without sin.

Moreover, you need have no fear of the future, for the desire to deviate from the path of virtue is killed."

"But," replied the youth dolefully, "I am more unhappy than ever, for I have no interest in life, and no desire to do anything. My existence is a dull round of dreary monotony."

"That," rejoined the Wise Man, "is your affair. Go out and do some good to others."

So the youth went forth and joined the Church, attending every service with punctuality and a devout demeanour, whereupon the world called him a pious fraud.

He then gave away large sums in charity, observing which munificence, the world remarked, with great bitterness, upon the sickening method he adopted in order to advertise himself. In short, every attempt he made to do good, either to himself or to others, was ascribed by the world to some unworthy motive.

Eventually, in his despair, he paid another visit to the Wise Man, and explained the position.

The Wise Man listened patiently to the youth's recital of his woes, and, having heard him out, rose from his seat and reached down the box from which he had taken the powders. Opening this, he showed the contents to his visitor.

The youth looked inside, and saw that the box was empty with the exception of one white powder.

“What is that for?” enquired the youth.

“That,” replied the Wise Man, “is the only one of the four that is a permanent and lasting cure for your complaint.”

“But will it make the world think better of me?” insisted the youth despondently.

“It will, most certainly,” the Wise Man assured him, with an inscrutable smile in his weary old eyes; “it is the only way to attain that end.”

So the youth swallowed the powder eagerly, and——

* * * * *

His obituary notices, which were in all the papers two days later, stand as a permanent record of the efficacy of the white powder to achieve the object claimed for it by the Wise Man of the East.

GRIM'S FAIRY TALE

BY a curious accident of nomenclature, Billy Grim is possessed of a temperament so mercurial and hilarious that any one knowing him personally is forced to smile even when his card is sent in, for one mentally connects his personality with the name on the pasteboard, and the contrast is provocative of mirth.

So Billy, without effort, obtains a good start for interviews at which he desires to gain his point.

I believe that this temperament is highly advantageous, especially to a business man. Be this as it may, Billy always has his own way, probably because he puts every one in a good humour.

When Billy went out of his way to cultivate Dorothy's acquaintance—which is a mild way of describing Billy's method—I took a more than ordinary interest in the incident.

The rapidity with which the affair was settled

and his engagement announced, however, startled even me, until I heard the story.

It appears that Billy obtained permission to take Dorothy for a spin in his motor-boat without a chaperone, by laughing at all maternal objections with such an infectious merriment, that Dorothy's mother was forced to laugh at them herself, and, before she could recover her breath, Billy was saying, "All right, then, Saturday afternoon at two. I'll call for her." And he did.

The pair accordingly started away from the P. & O. jetty in high spirits, and the little craft "chug, chugged," puffed, and snorted its fussy way up-river to the accompaniment of Dorothy's ringing laughter. Every one laughed at Billy, and Dorothy is as light-hearted as a sprite, and even more pretty in her elfin way.

When within about four miles of Ming-hong, however, something happened. The engine missed fire three times in rapid succession.

Billy anxiously inspected the mechanism, whilst Dorothy steered, and, just as he was pouring oil into a little glass reservoir, the engine gave a spasmodic gasp, spat violently at Billy—and stopped.

"Dirty little beast!" said Billy, wiping his face.

"Oh, Billy, what has happened—are we going to sink?" anxiously enquired Dorothy.

"Sink! Lord no!" answered Billy with his infectious laugh.

"But the engine has stopped," persisted Dorothy with some trepidation.

"Steer for the bank," answered Billy, as he busied himself with the mechanism.

Then the second event of importance happened. The occupants experienced the uncanny feeling which accompanies grounding as the boat slid gracefully up on to a mud-bank and stuck, some eighty yards from the shore.

"What was that?" enquired Dorothy, gazing around in alarm.

"We're bunkered," replied Billy.

"Bunkered?"

"Another run on one of the native banks."

"Oh! do explain what's happened. Is anything going to blow us up?"

"Yes."

"What? Tell me quickly, Billy."

"Your mother—when we get home"; and Billy commenced to whistle a certain hackneyed tune, till, seeing a really frightened look in Dorothy's eyes, he explained that the only real danger was to be looked for from her mother,

and that the tide would float them off again in about four hours. "Meantime," resumed Billy, "we had better make ourselves comfortable."

"But I refuse to stay here four hours, or one hour," asserted Dorothy with some heat. "You must take me home somehow; I don't care how you do it, but manage it you must!"

Billy took a careful survey of the heavens.

"What are you looking for?" enquired Dorothy crossly.

"Aeroplanes."

"Look here, Billy, you've got to stop fooling and think of a way to get off."

Billy assumed an injured expression. "Who ran her on the bank?" he enquired with the air of a martyr.

"Why you—I—oh, I don't know! The question is, how are we going to get her off?"

"Ah!" sighed Billy, gazing at the sky. "How?"

"Oh, do something; surely there is some way——"

"Yes," said Billy; "I'll make some tea; the time will pass quite quickly."

"Not for me," asserted Dorothy crossly, and then, as a native boat passed and suggested the

idea to her mind, she jumped up excitedly, and almost shouted, "I have it ! Call a native boat."

Billy started.

"Er—yes, of course, excellent idea ; I'll hail the next one that comes." Billy looked very thoughtful.

Whilst they were drinking their tea, a sharp look-out was kept, especially by Dorothy, till a native junk came close enough to be hailed.

"Here's one," said Dorothy excitedly ; "you can talk Chinese ; tell them I'll give them a dollar to take me to Shanghai."

"Right-o !" said Billy cheerfully, as, standing up, he made a funnel of his hands and shouted in Chinese, "Here, you yellow-skinned, disgusting worms, you keep away from this boat, you understand? The first man of you who dares to approach I'll cut his head off, burn his body, and scatter the ashes on the river. Understand?"

The figure of a Chinaman, who evidently considered himself equal to the task, slowly rose from the deck of the junk, and, with violent gesticulation and much suitable acting, screamed back a reply that cannot be even hinted at.

"What does he say?" enquired Dorothy anxiously.

"Hum," replied Billy, "I'm afraid he's rather rude. He said quite a lot of things, but the

main drift or purpose of his discourse—taking no account of the extraneous matter having no direct bearing upon the point at issue—is that, well,—he refuses, unconditionally, to even consider the matter of rendering any aid.”

“Brute !” burst out Dorothy viciously.

“Disgusting, selfish beast !” agreed Billy ; “sees us stranded here, and won’t even go out of his way for two minutes. Ah, these Chinese ! they’re all alike ; selfish, callous, ungrateful—pah !” and Billy gazed reproachfully at the retreating junk.

“Whatever will mother say?” ventured Dorothy.

Billy shuddered.

“What she says,” he remarked dismally, “is not of vital importance ; but what she will think—that’s what we have to consider, Dorothy : what will she think? And if she gets to know that *you* ran the boat up on the bank——” and Billy left the conclusion to imagination, as he gazed thoughtfully at his companion.

“Oh, Billy !”

“Poor little girl,” said Billy in soothing accents ; “don’t you worry, I’ll explain ; or at least I’ll try, I’ll——”

“Explanations,” interrupted Dorothy, “are quite useless with mother. If you only know

how she can think of questions to ask, and when one answers, she folds her arms and says, 'Hum !' It's awful."

"Must be—absolutely ghastly," assented Billy.

"You'll see !" said Dorothy, nodding her head.

"Eh ? "

"I say that you will realize what I mean when you explain—or try to," answered Dorothy with careful enunciation. "And then there are the others. People will say—oh, dreadful things !" Dorothy clasped her hands and rocked.

"Dreadful ; why dreadful ? "

"Oh, you don't know what people are, what they do say, in a case of this kind."

"How do you know ? " Billy enquired anxiously.

Dorothy blushed. If Dorothy knew how pretty she looks when this happens she would blush more frequently.

Billy succumbed. "Of course, you know of another case—somebody else—I mean ? "

Dorothy gave vent to a sigh of relief.

"Of course. You surely don't suppose——"

"Why, of course not," Billy hastened to assure her, "and if any one said anything about

you that wasn't nice, it necessarily follows that it would be untrue."

"It was—I mean, it would, naturally"—and no one knows whether Dorothy blushed again, because her head was turned the other way.

"But when they know that *you* ran the boat on the bank——"

"They will say that you did something to the engine and that——"

"It was arranged——"

Both together, in an excited whisper : "——by both of us."

Billy folded his arms, and, striking an attitude similar to that which, according to the pictures, was assumed by Napoleon upon all occasions of vital moment, with a dramatic gesture resumed : "There is one way of escape."

Billy was standing with his back to his listener, and consequently could not notice that her eyes twinkled.

"If," Billy resumed, "we could go back and say that we were engaged, there would be every excuse——"

"For pleading that——"

"In the excitement of the moment——"

"You——"

"No, you——"

"Well, I——"

"Yes, you were so——"

"Unaccountable for my actions that——"

"You—a—hum!"

"Ran the boat into a bank?"

"No, no, agreed——"

"What did I agree?" enquired Dorothy with raised eyebrows.

"To forgive me for being such an absolute——"

"Never mind that——"

"Thanks; and turning off the petrol feed with my foot——"

"Oh!"

"Because I'm going to marry you."

"But suppose," Dorothy gasped, "suppose I don't want to?"

"Pooh! That would only complicate matters more than ever," asserted Billy, "and you will surely acknowledge that things are sufficiently complicated already."

"Well," said Dorothy, gazing thoughtfully across the river, "I don't want to make things worse than they are, and if you think that will put things right——"

"Certain—absolutely certain!" interrupted Billy laughingly, as he made his way forward and quietly dropped the anchor.

"What was that splash?" enquired Dorothy.

"That," Billy reassured her, "was a heavy piece of iron I threw overboard in order to lighten the boat."

"Mother won't mind if we are a little late now," ventured Dorothy shyly.

"Mother," replied Billy airily, "doesn't matter any more ; nothing matters—absolutely nothing. You are now hypothecated. You are on the threshold of a new world, occupied mainly by myself, especially when I am present. You leave all—parents, home, all but the very mildest flirtations—and cleave unto me. That, in future, will be your principal occupation—cleaving.

"Most men contemplate marriage as an ideal, pictured in their own imagination. Matrimony is one result of that unsatisfied longing for perfection which is the origin of all religions and the great majority of divorce cases.

"In the likely event of disappointment the average man is constrained to confine his ambition to obtaining, as I have done, the best woman available."

"Meaning me?" enquired Dorothy.

"Um !" admitted Billy, frowning heavily.

"But," objected Dorothy, "what is your part of the contract?"

"My part," resumed Billy, "is to use every

endeavour to render the cleaving process so attractive and comfortable that you will not, during moments of boredom, speculate as to the superior advantages of cleaving elsewhere."

"As if I should!" said Dorothy indignantly.

"It would be very surprising if you didn't," asserted Billy, "for we are all polygamists by inclination, and monogamists by conformity."

"I think," said Dorothy severely, "that your ideas are positively horrid; you imply that nothing is honest, straightforward, and trustworthy."

"I am prepared to acknowledge that you are one of the exceptions," admitted Billy.

"It is refreshing to learn that you are not cynical about everything," rejoined Dorothy, as she surreptitiously placed her hand to her head in order to ascertain whether her switch was securely fastened, "for I never imagined a proposal could be so positively horrid. A man who makes love like you do doesn't deserve to have a wife."

"How do you know anything about the way I make love?" Billy enquired. "I've never made love to you, have I?"

"Most decidedly not!" Dorothy sniffed contemptuously.

"Then why judge?"

"Oh, I should imagine that you can make love to other women rather well."

"So they tell me," Billy admitted, "but you cannot expect me to treat you like an ordinary woman, can you?"

"If you are never going to make love to any one else," Dorothy stipulated, "I think I would rather you did."

"I promise!" said Billy, rising eagerly.

"Um! you see we are all polygamists by inclination——"

Billy sat down again.

"Never mind that," he interrupted uneasily.

"But suppose," suggested Dorothy, "you were to meet another woman you liked better than you like me, after you'd——"

"——married——"

"Yes."

"Suppose," retorted Billy, "you were to meet another man you like better than me——"

"There is," admitted Dorothy, "a great deal in what you say, but if you promise——"

"I promise," interrupted Billy fervently; "and you?"

"Oh, I don't have to!"

"Why?"

"Because," asserted Dorothy positively, "whether I meet another man I like better than

I like you is a matter that rests with you entirely."

"In that case," Billy remarked, "I see no reason to defer making love to you, do you?"

"None whatever," agreed Dorothy, pretending to yawn.

The fact that Billy was married exactly a month later, and that both he and his wife are ridiculously happy, leads me to the conclusion, however, that either Billy must bring more sentiment into the partnership than the conduct of his proposal would incline one to believe possible, or that Dorothy must have sufficient for both.

MONEY IN CURIOS

THE Fen Line steamer *Fenhaven*, having finished discharging her Shanghai cargo, was lying in the Whangpoo, opposite the Cosmopolitan Dock, riding light. Three of her hands were sitting on the fo'c's'le cursing the heat. Bill Frapp, the one with red hair and eyes that were not a pair, was holding forth to his companions, his theme being the remarkable fact that captains of ships are invariably chosen on account of their greed, hardness of heart, brutality, ugliness, and super-human cunning.

"I 'ave 'eard of skippers wot wasn't so bad, of course," he continued reminiscently, "but I never 'ad the luck to sail with one as I could get along with, never."

"Perhaps they didn't like the look of you; people do take fancies, you know," replied Peter Smith, one of his companions, a long, melancholy individual with a depressing voice. "Not that

I 'old wiv judgin' a man by 'is appearance myself—a man can't 'elp *that*. I remember years ago, when I was sailin' in the old *Mary Bollard*, we 'ad a bloke 'oo was that ugly, that when any one 'ad to talk to 'im they couldn't look at 'im ; used to look over 'is 'ead like, they did. I was always sorry for that feller till 'e stole two shillin's and thrippence out of my trousers pockets in a pub in Singapore. The only one of the officers wot was anyways decent to 'im was the ship's doctor, an' the mate said as 'ow 'e 'ad seen so many 'orrible sights before, that 'e didn't mind so much as wot ordinary people did—'e said, too, as the doctor wanted to buy 'is 'ead after death ; somethin' to do with a book 'e 'ad ; written by a bloke called Darwin or some such name."

"Wot 'as that got to do wiv me?" enquired Bill, lowering his brows and squinting horribly at the speaker.

"Nothin', of course," replied Peter, addressing his remark to his companion, but looking somewhat pointedly over his head.

Fortunately for the general harmony, the third man, George Herring by name, here woke up, stretched himself, and gave it as his opinion that going to sea was the silliest, nastiest, worst-paid job a man could select, and that the

food supplied to the crew of the *Fenhaven* was the worst in the history of the mercantile marine.

As he was speaking, five bells struck, and the three companions strolled leisurely aft and sat down upon the tarpaulin-covered hatch by the galley, with a look upon their faces which clearly conveyed the impression that although the act of eating was a necessary one, the consumption of food such as they were expecting the steward to bring out to them took the form more of a painful duty.

Presently a little man with a big smile, Mr. Magg by name, bustled out of the alleyway bearing three enamelled iron pie-dishes, each filled with some excellent Irish stew, which he deposited upon the hatch. He then went to the side, and leaning his elbows upon the rail, gazed thoughtfully across the river to a P. & O. liner anchored in the stream.

His mind was running upon the comparison between a steward's job on a Fen Line ship and a purser's billet on a P. & O. liner. He had just given vent to an envious sigh, when his reverie was interrupted by a cough, followed by a remark in the voice of Bill Frapp.

" 'Ave you ever 'eard about this 'ere vegetable business, Peter? "

"Yes ; people that are vegetarians never eat any meat."

"Yus, I know, but 'ave you ever 'eard of any one 'as made people be vegetablarians whether they wanted to be or not?"

"No."

"There ain't anything about it in the Merchant Shippin' Act, eh?"

"No."

"Then 'ere goes," and Bill Frapp took up his dish of stew, and walking to where the steward was leaning over the rail, got as close to him as possible, and deliberately emptied his dish into the river directly under Mr. Magg's nose. Having done this, he expectorated viciously over the side, and ostentatiously pulled in his belt two holes. He then made energetic signs to his companions to follow suit ; there-upon, but not without some natural hesitation, they seized their dishes, and with expressions of the utmost disgust, walked over to where the steward was standing with a far-away look in his eyes, and taking up a position one on each side of that much tried individual, with a turn of the wrist sent their dinner after that of their companion.

In view of the self-sacrifice entailed, not to mention the elaborate acting which accompanied

the deed, the result appeared to fall far short of their expectations ; for the steward's expression underwent not the slightest change as he continued to gaze across the river.

" I think," said Bill Frapp, " I shall go ashore and get some dinner."

" By yourself? " enquired Peter Smith and George Herring anxiously.

" There's nothin' to stop you comin' along if you've got the money," answered Bill indifferently.

" You know we ain't," asserted Peter in a hurt tone.

" Then why did you throw your grub overboard? " enquired Bill, in a tone so low that the steward could not hear.

Peter Smith and George Herring looked at their companion with open-mouthed astonishment.

" Because you told us to, and we knew you 'ad money. We saw you polishin' up six quid last Saturday with a bit of leather."

" I told you to? I did? why, you must be dotty," and Bill cast his eyes heavenward with a look of pious horror at this flagrant perversion of the truth, after which he shook his head in gentle reproach, and wished his companions good evening, as he was, he asserted, going ashore for dinner.

"There goes," said George Herring, whose eyes followed Bill's retreating form, "the meanest, ugliest, closefistedest, hideousest thing wot crawls. If only we could think of somethin' to fix 'im——"

Just then Mr. Magg, the steward, turned leisurely and faced the two men.

"If you want any salts," he remarked with a kindly smile, "I can let you have a dose apiece. I've always found that sailors in port, lying around and doing nothing but eat, eat, eat, all day long, get bilious, and go off their feed. If you want any, don't be afraid to ask."

"Eat!" burst out Peter; "why we 'aven't 'ad nothin' to eat since mornin'."

"What about your dinner?"

"Wot dinner?"

"The Irish stew I brought you out."

"Oh, *that!* why, you saw us throw it overboard."

"Throw it overboard?" questioned the steward incredulously. "When?"

"Just now, as you was leanin' over the rail, while Bill was talkin' about this 'ere vegetarian business."

"Hum!" replied Mr. Magg doubtfully, "funny thing! I've been standing there a long time, and I never saw any one throw anything

overboard. Of course, if you *say* you did, well and good, but you certainly don't get any more, however much you ask for it. As to the vegetarian business, I don't know what you're talking about—I wasn't listening," and Mr. Magg stepped inside the alleyway just in time to miss the pungent remarks that followed in his wake.

For the rest of the evening Peter Smith and George Herring remained in deep conversation, which was so prolonged as to be interrupted by the return of Bill Frapp, who was far too muddled to notice that his companions jumped guiltily apart upon seeing him approach.

Next day the unpleasantness of the preceding evening appeared to be forgotten, and both Peter and George were quite affable and polite to their messmate.

At three o'clock Peter went ashore, by special permission. He returned at six with a parcel, which he smuggled into his bunk unseen by Bill. At six-thirty Peter again went ashore, this time accompanied by George Herring. They had been gone, however, only about an hour, when a dapper, well-groomed marine from one of the British cruisers lying in the river climbed the gangway and came aboard. Bill Frapp being on duty, the marine accosted him immediately

he reached the deck, to enquire whether Mr. Peter Smith was on board.

"No," replied Bill, "'es gone ashore."

"Hum," muttered the marine, glancing round the decks with ill-concealed contempt, "that's a pity. The Rear-Admiral particularly told me not to go till I'd seen 'im."

"Rear-Admiral! See Peter! Wot's up?"

"It's about a blue and white 'awthorn ginger jar that Mr. Smith 'as got. Any'ow, I can't stop; you give 'im this note," and the marine, who appeared to be in a hurry, turned on his heel, and made his way down the gangway.

Bill Frapp stood for some time with the note in his hand, turning it over and trying to read through the envelope. Then his eye caught the flap. It was stuck down by the tiniest bit of gum at the very tip only, and when Bill pushed his thumbnail under this, he was surprised to find that the letter came open.

Now Bill Frapp was not the man to have any scruples about opening a letter that did not belong to him, so in another second he was reading as follows:—

"MR. P. SMITH

"S.S. *Fenhaven*.

"DEAR SIR,—

"I thank you for sending your blue and white ginger jar for inspection. It appears to

be quite genuine, but without having a further opinion upon it from a home expert, I am afraid I cannot offer you more than five thousand dollars (\$5,000) for it. If, however, you are prepared to accept this amount, please bring me the jar, and I will hand you the money. It is only fair, however, to inform you that, if you took the jar home, you would, in all probability, get far more for it.

“Yours faithfully,

“HENRY G. CRAWLEY-HAWKES.”

“Gorstreuth !” muttered Bill, leaning against the rail for support. “Five thousand dollars ! Five ‘undred bloomin’ quid,” and with feelings too strong for further comment, he regummed the flap of the envelope, pressing it down carefully with his sleeve.

At ten o’clock, Peter and George returned, and enquired anxiously whether any one had been aboard with a letter.

“Letter?” enquired Bill, raising his eyes, “what letter?”

“We was expectin’ one,” asserted Peter, “but never mind, it may come to-morrer.”

Half an hour later, whilst Peter and George were sitting on the fo’c’s’le head, cleaning, with every evidence of extreme care, not

to say veneration, what appeared to be an ordinary ginger jar, Bill Frapp approached them, whistling, and with his hands in his pockets.

"Ullo, what's that? "

"Ginger jar," answered Peter.

"Wot d'you want to clean it for?—ain't no use, is it? "

"Dunno," replied Peter, looking up suspiciously. "I did 'ear of one of these old china things, just like this it was too, bein' sold for six thousand quid. The bloke wot took it 'ome an' sold it ain't never been sober since, an' that's four years ago."

"That one don't look as if it was worth much," commented Bill.

"P'raps, p'raps not," rejoined Peter mysteriously.

"Want to sell it? " enquired Bill, in an off-hand way.

"I'm tryin' to."

"'Ow much? "

"Well," replied Peter thoughtfully, "I might get ten quid for it, p'raps more."

"P'raps less," and Bill laughed offensively, but there was a note of excitement in the laugh, nevertheless.

"After a pause, during which Peter went on

unconcernedly polishing the jar, Bill broke in again.

"I don't know as I would mind goin' in for a spec' myself, if you think there's anythin' in it, Peter."

"You ain't got ten quid."

"Ten quid! No, I was thinkin' about five shillin's."

After a very protracted haggling, a bargain was struck, whereby Bill bought the jar for five pounds ten shillings, upon the distinct understanding that the purchase was entirely at his own risk, Peter impressing upon him, most solemnly, and calling the others to witness, that he did not know the value of the jar himself.

Next morning Bill announced his intention of going ashore to see a man about the re-sale of the curio, and entered the fo'c's'le to dress for the purpose.

After the lapse of five minutes he emerged, looking very white about the gills, and still dressed in his working clothes.

"Has any one seen a letter lyin' around?" he enquired.

"What kind of a letter?" asked George Herring.

"There ain't thousands an' thousands of letters lyin' around," answered Bill Frapp

irritably ; “ ’ave any of you seen any kind of a letter? ”

“ Yus. I saw a letter lyin’ on the deck this mornin’, addressed to Peter Smith, an’ I give it to ’im,” admitted George.

Bill seemed to be feeling extremely uncomfortable, for he fidgeted about from one leg to the other, and glanced furtively at his companion.

“ Wot did Peter say, when ’e got the letter? ” enquired Bill anxiously.

“ ’E larfed fit to burst,” announced George Herring.

“ *Larfed!* wot at? ”

“ At the letter ; ’e said as ’ow some lobster was a-tryin’ to pull ’is leg, an’ get free drinks out ov ’im, but that the game was too old, an’ ’e pitched the letter over the side.”

“ EH? ” said Bill, blinking and squinting horribly.

“ Pitched the letter over the side, ’e did,” repeated George, “ said as ’ow it was supposed to come from a Rear-Admiral Somebody, wiv a triple-expansion name, and that any — fool knows that there aint a Rear-Admiral in Shanghai, so that the letter must be a catch to get free beer out ov ’im, ’e said.”

“ Ho,” murmured Bill weakly ; “ did ’e? ”

"You ain't lookin' well," asserted George, with great concern ; "you didn't go an' eat a lot ov rich food last night now, did you?"

But the remark was addressed to Bill Frapp's back, as he walked unsteadily through the door of the alleyway, the interior darkness mercifully hiding his painfully working features from the curious gaze of his grinning companion.

SCIENCE VERSUS SENTIMENT

SEVEN of us were sitting round the fire in the smoking-room of the Tramps' Club, when Burrows suggested a drink. It was probably this suggestion that turned the conversation to the subject of alcohol as a beverage. Burrows, a man with an enquiring mind, then put the question to Forbes, who had recently taken his M.D. with considerable *éclat*, as to whether drink is in reality harmful.

"My dear chap," replied Forbes quietly, "if you want me to answer that question you must show me your man, and let me see the effect it has upon him over a long period. Drink affects every man in a different way, according to temperament and—several other idiosyncrasies. You remember Arbuthnot?"

"Yes."

"Well, there's bad news about Arbuthnot."

"What has that to do with drink?" some one asked.

"Everything," replied Forbes laconically.

"Tell us!" we insisted in chorus.

"Well——" Forbes hesitated, "I'll tell you if you insist, but I warn you it's a beastly yarn—absolutely beastly. You see, Arbuthnot was, as you will remember, a teetotaller and a brilliantly clever man, but the effect that alcohol had upon him was appalling. He became a teetotaller after the night he nearly killed a policeman outside Hatchett's Restaurant. No one, other than myself, saw what happened. To the onlookers the constable appeared to be gripped in Arbuthnot's arms for a few seconds, and then to fall insensible without making a sound. Arbuthnot had dug his thumb into a certain place in the officer's neck, and that was all. Had he been strictly sober, he would have been, as you know, the very last person to do anything of the kind. Since then I have never known him take a 'hard' drink until last Friday, upon which evening I met him sitting at a table on the ground-floor in the Café Royal, drunk—beastly, shamelessly, inexcusably drunk."

"My dear chap," expostulated Burrows, "why speak with the severity of the lean and slippered pantaloons?"

"You've never seen Arbuthnot drunk, have you?" enquired Forbes.

"No," Burrows admitted, "I cannot say that I have, nor can I imagine him so."

"Had you seen him as I did, and listened to him—but there, you will understand better when I tell you the story.

"I met him in the Café Royal exactly a week after his engagement was announced. He was sitting at a table in the far left-hand corner. His linen was unclean, and his head was moving slowly from side to side. He was blinking rapidly through his spectacles, and swearing softly to himself with intense earnestness.

"‘Hello, Arbuthnot!’ I said cheerfully.

"He raised his swaying head and looked at me, but his eyes were unsteady, and he frowned heavily in trying to focus them on my face. It was then I noticed that the pupils were widely dilated and were shining like those of a cat in the dark.

"‘Siddown,’ said Arbuthnot.

"I sat down, and a waiter approached. ‘Whisky and soda,’ I said, holding up one finger.

"Arbuthnot's eyes were fixed on the table, and, although their direction had not changed, he appeared to have noticed my action, for a deeper

flush of anger crept up under his skin as he glared at the waiter.

“ ‘Two !’ he said.

“ Then he leaned across the table and looked at me. His eyes shone and glittered with hate—causeless, illogical, primordial hate. The sight was not a pleasant one by any means. Again his expression changed quite suddenly, and his eyes melted to the softness of a woman’s and glistened with moisture.

“ ‘I’ve broken off the engagement,’ he said, with a horrible imprecation ; ‘broken it off . . . broken it off . . . the sweetest, best, and purest-minded woman that ever lifted a thinking man’s mind out of the damned, horrible, stinking mud that science forces him to wallow in like a—pah !—hup—educated pig—science, damnation’—he was all hate again—‘what is it? Every year some one makes a discovery, and we find that many conclusions we held like a religion, sacred, were as silly, by God, as—as blood-letting. Yesterday, Forbes, I bought a pair of lavender-coloured socks—me ! lavender-coloured socks and a tie. D’you know why? Shut up—damn it, man, keep quiet ! *You* don’t know why. *I* do, and I didn’t see even that till afterwards. Then I burned them. I bought them to attract the female, like a bally

Argus pheasant displaying his ornaments ; strutting about and performing strange antics in front of the hen. That's what the Argus pheasant does ; displays the ocelli on his secondary wing-feathers to attract the female. Damn it ! I chose a pair of lavender socks with little circles interwoven, and I should have pulled up my trousers to show them. I know it. Oh, damn ! absolutely damn ! The love of the poets ! What ? Shut up. You can't see it, man, I know that ! You want to make some damned silly joke about it. Wit ! What ! Can't you understand I'm only telling you because I'm drunk ? You're a business man : Pfaugh ! A pheasant in lavender socks !' he chuckled—maudlin. 'And I'm in love, Forbes—you hear me—in love. I'd kill a man who attempted to take her from me, like a stinking savage. Ha ! ha ! have you ever thought why you put your arm round a girl's waist, Forbes ? Shut up ! I'll tell you. I saw it the other day. It's a habit handed down from our honoured ancestors the parasitic worms, who, when fully grown, have the lower surface of the terminal part of their bodies roughened like a rasp, so that they can coil round and hold the female. Now do you see why I bought lavender socks and a tie, and why I put my—hup—prehensile organ round her

waist? That's why I *wanted* to, see? Damnation! Waiter, waiter! come here, you splay-footed, verminous primate—lucky devil—get two whisky and sodas; eh? all right, one then.

“‘And she knows how to dress, Forbes. Beautiful. When I see her in a new costume, elaborate, artistically toned colours, and designed with the speci—specific object of showing off curves. . . . Ugh! Animals with brains developed enough to understand . . . everything to account for love by resolving it into its elements. Ha! ha! Love equals CO_2 plus a specified list of other formulæ, plus nitrogen, plus so many H_2Os , excited into activity by the chemical action of so-and-so at a temperature of 98.4 Fahrenheit. We'll know soon, Forbes, eh? Real, genuine, effective love-potions from the Government Hospital, out-patients' department. Antidotes 9d. a bottle. Good God! . . .’”

Here Forbes paused in his narrative and looked round the circle.

“Had enough?” he enquired.

No one answered.

“I won't tell you any more, anyhow, though Arbuthnot talked on for half an hour, and his language became worse. He had four more drinks whilst I was there before he collapsed, and I took him to my rooms.”

"Mad!" said Burrows.

"What is madness?" asked Forbes.

But no one had an answer ready. One has to be so exact with Forbes. We know him.

"What happened when he woke up?" asked Faulkner.

"Didn't remember anything about it. Wondered how he came to be in my chambers," answered Forbes.

Then Faulkner surprised us all—

"He is to be married on the 25th of next month. Saw him yesterday morning. Good-night, you chaps."

"One moment," said Forbes, rising; "I may as well tell you now, you will hear in the morning. Arbuthnot shot himself at 7 o'clock this evening. I was there half an hour after the tragedy. A cut-glass whisky decanter lay smashed on the floor, and a glass had been thrown at the wall. The place where it hit was splashed around and wet. A torn photo lay amongst the broken glass—a photo of a young, very pretty girl in evening dress. Any one have another drink?"

But no one responded, so Forbes said good-night and left us.

"Funny chap, was Arbuthnot," Faulkner remarked thoughtfully.

"Yes," assented Burrows, who was gazing into the fire, "you never knew exactly what he meant; he . . . Oh! I don't know; he was a peculiar chap . . . peculiar . . . no sense of humour."

"That's it," agreed Faulkner, "his lack of appreciation of the humorous. Had he been possessed of this quality he would have enjoyed everything in life—even women."

And then Faulkner—who is a pronounced woman-hater, and consequently certain to fall in love with sufficient abandon to become a drivelling lunatic—also took his departure.

BUYING A PONY

ALGY SMYTHE had Influence. He needed it. Algy without Influence would have meant Algy without a lucrative position, and Algy without a lucrative position would have meant—well, it is impossible to imagine anything so absurd, and besides, it is unkind to Algy. No one had ever been unkind to Algy before he came to Shanghai, because of the Influence. He came out East as a representative of the Home Influence, to join the Shanghai branch of his father's great business, and, such being the case, was allowed to do no work and enjoy much play, overdevelop his priggishness, and wear an insufferable air of conceit.

So Algy joined the Shanghai Club, the Race Club, the Country Club, and the Polo Club. He was a godsend to his boy, Connoisseurs, Ltd., and the Horse Bazaar. Lane Crawfords made a pet of him.

He was a fairly good rider, but knew very

little about horses, which, although a paradox, is, I assure you, quite a common combination amongst the employers of grooms ; it being the business of the latter, of course, to keep their usually limited knowledge to themselves, only giving away a " little learning " occasionally as a sop.

So Algy girded up his loins in costly Conduit Street breeches, and cast a knowing glance over various mobs of " griffins " as they came down from up-country.

A newly arrived China pony is called a " griffin," either because he resembles that traditional animal more than the true equine in temper, or because the first local owners of race-ponies were Semitic. If the latter derivation is accepted, the name is taken from the Greek γρύψ, or vulture, so called on account of the hooked beak.

Now, the China pony is, like every other thing Chinese, whether living, dead, or half and half (the majority being the latter), difficult to understand. Men with many years' observation to help them continually make mistakes about China ponies. After long experience they discover what a lot there is to learn. Algy, however, had no difficulty in this respect. He knew at once.

Nothing in any mob he saw was good enough ; they all had goose rumps, slack loins, or bad quarters.

Eventually a certain paper-hunter heard of Algy, and sent him a pony to look over. The animal looked well ; short back, long sweep underneath the belly, fine massive quarters, and an excellent business-like shoulder. Algy bought him upon the condition that the animal should be delivered next day. In order to seal the bargain and prevent mistakes, he wrote his address on a card thus :—

Deliver to :—

Mr. A. SMYTHE,

42, The Bund,

(second floor),

against Tls. 240 (two hundred and forty taels).

This note he signed, receiving in return a sale note in the usual form.

That night he boasted of his purchase in the Race Club, giving the name of the pony, at which the boastees laughed, giggled, or grinned, according to disposition or to graduated stage of alcoholism. Algy reddened.

“Anything wrong with the pony?” he enquired.

“Speedycutter,” his audience laughed in chorus.

Algy left the Race Club with a glitter in his eye, and made for the address of the vendor of the pony, whom he was so fortunate as to find at home.

Here he remonstrated, at first gently, then loudly, and finally furiously, all without avail, however, as the seller pointed to the card with name, price, and place of delivery.

It was whilst examining this card as closely as possible that a brilliant idea occurred to Algy. This idea was that his instructions were to deliver the pony to his address, 42, The Bund, *second floor*, for Tls. 240.

So Algy laughed that irritating laugh of his, and remarked that when the pony was delivered to him at the address given he would pay for it. The vendor thanked him.

"Don't forget," said Algy, with a knowing grin, "second floor"; and with that he left, feeling thoroughly good at having outwitted the man who tried to outwit him.

Twelve-thirty that evening found Algy ascending the stairs to his room, very carefully, with one hand on his head and the other on the banisters.

Entering the sitting-room, he threw off his cloak and hat, drank a soda from the siphon, and feeling thoroughly sleepy, made for his bedroom.

Directly he opened the door of his sleeping apartment, however, he knew there was something wrong. He felt that he was not alone, and there was a peculiar smell that seemed strangely familiar, though for the life of him he couldn't place it.

Whilst puzzling this out, however, there came a sound out of the darkness that put all doubts and uncertainties to rest. This sound resembled that made by a motor horn with catarrh of the bowels, and was unmistakably the snort of a frightened pony. Hastily switching on the light, Algy, to his unspeakable horror, beheld the animal he had purchased that afternoon standing by his bed, with a hatbox threaded on one leg and a look of haughty resentment in his eyes.

Upon seeing Algy, the pony passaged towards him with his ears well back, eyeing him all over the body the while, and evidently looking for a vital spot. Algy dodged cleverly, and sparred for time. The pony shaped up again, and commenced to rush things. Algy's foot-work in this round was excellent. Being out of condition, however, he soon began to tire, so tried different tactics. He held out a shaky hand, and in an unsteady voice said persuasively : " Cop, cop, come along, boy, cooome

along ! " with the most coaxing accents he had ever used in any conservatory, at any time, anywhere.

The pony "came along" in response to this appeal—sideways, his hindquarters positively radiating impatient viciousness, which a glance at his head thoroughly confirmed. There could be no doubt that the animal was looking for an opening, seeing which, Algy promptly did the same, and, making an almost hysterical snatch at the handle, disappeared through the door like a flash, just missing a vicious upper-cut which sent a top panel of the door through a fanlight in the passage and out into the street, where it sailed, edge first, into the neck of a Sikh policeman, who immediately turned and rent a 'ricksha coolie as a relief to the feelings aroused by this insult to the fighting blood of his race.

Round one—decidedly in favour of the pony.

Algy, looking very blown and blotchy of face, sat down upon the stairs to think. He was prepared to face any ordinary difficulty, but really, a vicious pony in one's bedroom at 12.30 a.m. is certainly a poser.

"If I leave him there," he mused, "I might starve him to death," at which his eye kindled, "or I might shoot him ; but then there is the

carpet to consider, and the S.P.C.A., and, Great Britain ! the tenants underneath."

After much consideration, Algy rang the bell for his boy, who appeared after some delay, rubbing his eyes.

"Yes, master."

"Take that pony outside." Algy pointed with an off-hand gesture to the bedroom door.

"No can, master."

"Then what for you let any man puttee he that side, you soft-nosed, slit-eyed reptile?"

"My no savvy ; other master talkee you have talkee he puttee he that side."

"Well ! Suppose I did—haven't you got any brains?"

"What thing belong blains?" enquired the boy, with the earnest expression of one who desires to learn.

"You think so I wanchee pony my bedroom side?" roared Algy.

"My no savvy, master ; no man can savvy what thing foreign man wanchee do ; I think so——"

"Go away," Algy sobbed ; "oh, go away, you yellow parasite, before I become profane."

The boy complied, with that rapid motion characteristic of the Chinese servant when he

is retiring from a difficult situation for which he is in any way responsible.

Of course, Algy had plenty of friends. A man in his position usually has in Shanghai, and he was not long in waking up two of them ; that is to say, of course, waking them up as much as people in Shanghai do wake up. It would be unkind to repeat the merciless chaff with which he was greeted in each case, but at length his two friends, a mafoo,¹ and himself arrived outside his rooms, and, ascending the stairs, held a consultation on the landing. Algy stood with his back to the door, from which position he was holding forth eloquently, when there came a violent snort from the direction of the broken panel.

Jumping round as if he had been shot, Algy was surprised to see the pony trying his best to blow some carbolic tooth-powder out of his nostrils, the flavour evidently being distasteful.

"Be careful!" advised Algy.

This advice was evidently superfluous.

"Better tie up one leg," suggested Bob Grayson, the broker.

"Sling him, and pass him through the window," suggested Freddy, the popular jockey.

¹ Chinese stableman.

"Rot!" replied Algy; "better lead him downstairs, it's much easier."

"O.K.," assented the two; "go ahead," and they made way for Algy to enter.

Algy blushed and turned to the mafoo: "Go inside catchee pony, mafoo."

"Can pay money?" suggested the mafoo, with the air of one who enquires merely as a matter of form.

"Of course."

"All ly."

The mafoo disappeared cautiously inside, and three noses, one above the other, remained as if jammed in the door opening.

What happened next, no one seems to be able to describe with accuracy. Freddy said that the pony flew at him, Bob is certain that there was a gas explosion, and Algy swears positively that Bob tried to strangle him. There seems to be no doubt, however, that the mafoo passed from the far side of the room to the landing without once touching the floor. Neither was he killed, for he had only seven flesh wounds, the result of the broken wood, which he acquired whilst passing through the door without pausing to open it.

"Hurt?" enquired everyone of the prostrate mafoo.

"I think so he no wantchee come out," answered the damaged Chinaman, nodding his sanguinary head towards the broken door. "I think so he no savvy my, more better catchee he own mafoo. I savvy he, I go catchee," and he disappeared.

The three anxious men now sat down in the sitting-room to wait, making from time to time those idiotic suggestions usual on such occasions, with that air of infinite wisdom and emphasis invariably assumed by a person who doesn't know the first thing about the subject under discussion, and is conscious of the fact.

After what seemed to be about four days and nights, the pony's own mafoo appeared, and agreed to take the animal away for \$10.00.

Algy suggested that the Chinaman should take the pony instead of the \$10.00, but the mafoo demurred. The financial side of the question being eventually settled, the mafoo calmly entered the room without the slightest hesitation, and, having given the pony an opportunity to recognize, by his sense of smell, that the newcomer was an old acquaintance from whom there was nothing to fear, he patted the animal's neck and led him out on to the landing.

Now, getting a pony upstairs, and getting a pony downstairs, are, as you will discover if

you try it, two totally different operations. Nothing could induce the animal to leave the landing. Freddy's suggestion that they should push him down met with a chilly silence, there being no one present confident that he could push as hard as the pony.

Algy, by now thoroughly desperate, disappeared for a moment and returned with a stout, broad plank. Having got the pony out of the way, he placed the plank on the floor with one end overlapping the top step. Underneath the back end he inserted a stout iron bar. These operations being complete, he instructed the newly arrived mafoo to stand the pony on the board with his head facing downstairs.

All preparations being now complete, the three grasped the end of the lever, and with a mighty heave, down shot the pony, accompanied by loud cheers from the operators, and altogether the most fiendish clatter and row ever heard in that respectable building known as No. 42, The Bund.

If you have ever seen a small boy travel downstairs on a tea tray, you have some idea of the way that pony reached the street, but his look of surprise cannot be described. The fact that he was entered in the next auction as "an excellent performer in the country" is posi-

tive proof, however, that he did not mark himself badly.

Algy's favourite expression now is : " Yes, one can do anything with China ponies, provided, of course, one understands how to handle them."

MODERN MAXIMS

To obtain permanent satisfaction from one woman is difficult. To obtain permanent satisfaction from many women is impossible.

It is also impossible to obtain permanent satisfaction from a bad woman, such being the design of Nature—and the woman.

The desire to indulge in vice is the only real attraction vice itself possesses.

Many men who have discovered this, marry as a remedy, and stay out late at night as an antidote.

A woman is the plastic clay which a man can mould into an object of great beauty and value, or pitiful benevolence.

A weak man is the clay which a woman can fashion into a personality upon which pity is wasted, and rigid discipline experimental.

Never blame a woman who—owing to her beauty, simplicity, or her capacity for love, is—unfortunate. Either she desired beyond all

things to be loved, or feared a rival in the affections of a man whom she considered—or mercifully still considers—worth the price paid for his interest.

Marry a woman with an even, sweet temper, and you will invariably abuse her.

Marry a woman with a bad temper, and she will do you an infinite amount of good, but you will probably never notice the benefit yourself—though your chastened demeanour will be vastly appreciated by your friends.

There is a woman somewhere who could make any man happy. There are hundreds of benevolent institutions busily engaged in clearing up the mess she made in trying to achieve that object.

In making love to a married woman, one should bear in mind the fact that if she is worth making love to, it is not worth while making love to her.

Whenever a woman stops to admire the tree of knowledge, she should bear in mind that you cannot have your apple and eat it too.

If ever you meet a woman who succeeds in convincing you that you are an exceptionally fine fellow, be very, very careful. She has far more intelligence than you.

Should you, at any time, find yourself *tête-*

à-tête with a married woman, and have no clear idea how this eminently desirable state of affairs was brought about, feel around and grab all the caution within reach. It will, moreover, show no extravagance on your part if you overdraw all you are likely to acquire in the future, for this is the best opportunity that will ever arise for you to employ it to advantage.

HOW MRS. GUPPY GOT HER MEDICINE

MRS. GUPPY, better known perhaps as the Beauty of Bubbling Well, was a lady of extreme lassitude. She had never been known to kiss any one, and it made her tired even to be kissed.

People consequently soon wearied of kissing her, so that she naturally developed all those petty irritating characteristics common to the woman who has been debarred by circumstances from fulfilling the mission in life for which women were most obviously designed.

There are not sufficient men who know how to kiss a woman properly to go round ; and all those who are proficient in the art are appropriated, sequestered, and never permitted to escape by the first woman upon whom their art is exercised.

Hence Mrs. Guppy's lassitude. She was an

addled embryo of possibilities owing to insufficient and incompetent kissing.

Her origin was obscure, and she was wise enough to make it her business to see that it remained so to people in general. Of course this does not apply to us, as we are not people in general, and know that her early life was closely associated with a draper's shop in London, where her domestic arrangements were technically referred to as "living in."

In her youth she developed swollen feet from continually standing up to perform her duties, but when she came to Shanghai as wife of a man in a fairly good position, she developed a "swelled head" from continually sitting down because she had no duties to perform.

After two years' residence in Shanghai, she acquired a backbone like a bicycle chain, and was most particular about the social position of those with whom she mixed.

Her idea of social position was, of course, salary; and she kept on hand a thousand-tael obeisance, a seven-fifty salute, a five-hundred smile, and a three-fifty greeting, but never stocked anything cheaper than the latter, with the exception of her two-fifty-and-under look-the-other-way, because she knew the horrors of fifteen shillings a week herself, and resolved

never to have anything more to do with cheapness.

She was a woman born and designed for ease and luxury, but she never realized how fortunate it was for her that she married into it—in time.

To put the matter quite plainly, Mrs. Guppy, like more thousands than I care even to guess at, was moral because she was married. Having sold her body, and in consequence become respectable, she proceeded to sell her soul and spirit, which was all she had left to sell, for “value received” in the form of Social Position, which latter Mrs. Guppy didn’t understand, and in consequence lost heavily on the exchange.

Good luck held out a helping hand, assisted her out of the mud, and placed her on the road to success. So soon, however, as she came within sight of the goal of her desire, she kicked good luck in the back with the toe of her pointed shoe, and refused to recognize him ; but instead, talked of “getting one’s deserts.”

Her future husband, after five years’ residence in the East, had gone home to England, discovered her behind the counter of the shop before referred to, which he entered in order to purchase an article of feminine frippery, and left, having purchased the assistant as well.

He married her as the result of fascination and curiosity, satisfied his curiosity about her on the voyage out, and his fascination came unstuck, as it were, within six months of his wedding-day. Within two years of his marriage, however, he lost his life owing to a lack of proficiency in arithmetic. He couldn't count his drinks after swallowing five, so that one summer, when the hot weather came in, he went out. One of the two had to go, and the heat won easily. Mrs. Guppy drew his insurance money with a look of reluctance and sorrow, feeling, when the money was paid over, as if she had won the Hankow Lottery.

Her life now became one of lassitude and complete emptiness. After some months she commenced to realize that a widow resembles every other class of human beings in that she cannot have a good time unless she helps others to do likewise. With this difference, however, that it is far more dangerous for a widow to have a good time than for others, because the world, being wise, and having an experience of widows extending over at least 3,911 years, has satisfied itself that widows can only have a really good time as such by ceasing to be quite good. This statement, of course, will not be believed by many, but I leave it to the intelligence (if any) of the reader.

If there still remains any doubt, let said reader go and enquire of the first available widow, and he will certainly be informed that the idea is utterly absurd. This opinion will be given with that extreme earnestness and look of candid truth that all women assume when they are lying, and will finally convince him of the veracity of my statement.

Had Mrs. Guppy been a man, she would, at this dreary stage of her existence, have taken to drink, but being a woman, she took to a complete course of imaginary ailments, and made a contract with the most attractive doctor she could find.

The medico gave her harmless drugs and sympathy, till, becoming convinced both that something must be done to make her imagine she was better, and also that it was by this time necessary to get the infernal nuisance off his hands, he recommended a change of climate.

As the patient refused to hear of leaving Shanghai, he looked grave and recommended vivisection in the form of an operation for appendicitis, knowing that if she had the disease the operation would do her good, and if she hadn't, which seemed probable, it wouldn't do her any harm, but on the contrary

would give her the opportunity to imagine she was better, which was all that was necessary.

This view of the doctor was confirmed by the quite patent fact that Mrs. Guppy was utterly useless in her present condition both to herself and to others.

Mrs. Guppy, however, refused the change of climate, and shied violently at the operation, as was to be expected. The doctor insisted that either the one or the other was absolutely necessary, so, like a sensible woman, she changed her doctor. The new doctor, having more pluck than the old, told her the only treatment suitable for her complaint was another marriage, to which Mrs. Guppy replied that she preferred the complaint. This was, of course, a lie, but Mrs. Guppy generally did lie. What woman, even were she gnashing her teeth to get a certain man, would not prefer torture on the rack to an acknowledgment of her desire except to the man himself? And even then, of course, she would use most of her arts and all her openwork to make that man speak first, her chief desire in life at that time being to yield with a show of reluctance. This is usually done in order to impress the man with the enormity of her sacrifice, which impression will be carefully stored up for future use.

It was at this stage that Mrs. Guppy commenced—to use an American expression—to feel a draught.

If she married again, she would lose her freedom, a thing that she had wanted for years, but then, if she didn't marry, her freedom would be just about as much use as four and a half bushels of nothing.

Now, it is particularly unfortunate that it is only when we get what we want that we discover we didn't really want it at all.

Here was poor little Mrs. Guppy, comfortably off, her husband comfortably off, and she herself so discontented and bored that she developed the habit of moving her shoulders about one after the other on account of that uncomfortable feeling that one's clothes don't fit.

It was whilst in this frame of mind that Mrs. Guppy received a shock that staggered her, sent her lassitude flying, and once more converted her ridiculous backbone into a serviceable spine.

She met a man one evening who aroused her interest. She was introduced to him, and after speaking a few words he, as it were, took hold of her attention by the hair of its head, and dragged it about with him wherever he went.

Mrs. Guppy became frightened, fought against his dominance with all her might—which didn't

amount to much, by the way—and finished up by hoping that she wouldn't succeed.

She didn't.

The climax was reached one evening when this man actually had the audacity to kiss her.

Fortunately for Mrs. Guppy, the man knew how to kiss a woman really well, and as a result she was left gasping with astonishment and furious with—no, not rage either, but, as Mrs. Guppy herself didn't know what it was, it is quite useless my trying to describe her state of mind.

To say that Mrs. Guppy was astonished would be like describing an earthquake as merely unpleasant.

She was about to scream, but realized in time that if she did, the man might not like it, and the next second was congratulating herself that she had refrained, because Mrs. Guppy saw in a flash that if he didn't do it again, life would be a mere blank once more.

The doctor called next day and pronounced Mrs. Guppy completely cured, explaining at the same time in a highly technical and really clever manner how his medicine had achieved the desired result.

Mrs. Guppy thanked him profusely, and im-

mediately he left, curled up on the sofa and laughed until the tears came into her eyes.

She had discovered her own complaint, and its cure, in about ten seconds, whereas it had taken two doctors ten weeks. Besides, she had always hated drugs, and the new treatment was—well, really it wasn't at all unpleasant.

SQUARING-UP WITH THE STEWARD

WARREN, the fourth officer of the S.S. *Chaunton*, spat viciously over the side.

"Holy smoke! what a life."

"Seen worse," replied Butterson, the third.

"I know," replied Warren; "but I haven't."

"What have you to complain about in running to Shanghai—you cargo officer, too? Of course you don't know, this being your first trip, but if I'd known it was to be Shanghai I should have asked to go as fourth instead of taking my promotion this voyage."

"It's so hard to judge when you're lyin'," complained Warren; "what do you mean by cargo officer and all the rest of it?"

"Ask the steward; I haven't time to try to make you understand anything just now," said the third, unfolding himself reluctantly from the rail and going forward.

Now, the steward and the third officer had

been closeted together that morning over a couple of "pegs," and out of the spirit of Scotland—and mischief—had concocted a plot for the "taking down" of the fourth officer, which course was considered necessary by them for the peace of the ship and the good of his soul. For Warren's principal weakness was whisky, which he drank, not as a connoisseur, discriminately, but as a toper, excessively.

Bent on information, Warren accordingly steered a course for the steward's cabin, upon reaching which he entered and called for a "peg."

"Butterton's been telling me he'd like my job because we are running to Shanghai," said he, holding up his glass, and looking into it from various aspects with an expression in which surprise and disdain were equally apparent, which expression the steward, with the professional ease of long practice, totally ignored.

"Don't wonder," replied Mr. Briggs, the steward, glancing absently, and with a despondent sigh, through a bulky bundle of I O U's marked "Warren"; "shouldn't mind it myself for the next few weeks."

"Perhaps when you've done reckoning up your profits you'll explain what you mean," said the fourth testily; "for why any one with

your chances to make money without actually coming within the scope of the law should pine for a job like mine, I fail to see."

"Well, you see," explained Briggs, carefully separating his visitor's I O U's from the others and patting them thoughtfully, "in my job a feller has to take many chances."

"Yes, so I understand," agreed the fourth, wilfully misunderstanding him, "but, after all, if you do manage to get away with it, it must be a fat job; those houses of yours in White-chapel now——"

"Now, as you're placed," hastily interrupted Briggs, "it's all receive and no pay. Cases of whisky, of course, aren't as good as money to a man like Butterson, who knows when he has enough, but when he was in your job we used to arrange it between us, and, if I can do anything for a friend, I am always willing to oblige."

"Come, Briggs, we've always been good pals; put me up to it. What cases of whisky are you talking about, and what used you to arrange with Butterson?"

"Do you mean to sit there and tell me seriously you don't know the custom in Shanghai?" with a look of the utmost surprise.

"Why, I naturally thought you had only taken

this job for the purpose of profiting by that same custom."

"I give my word I don't; but see here, Briggs, if you can help me I won't leave you out," asserted the fourth importantly, sitting up straight on the locker.

"All right," agreed the steward, apparently jumping at the chance; "when you get to Shanghai, look out for the consignees when they come to look at their cargo. Only the Chinese, of course—don't worry about the others. When you see a Chink dressed in silk, with a gold-mounted fan and rings on his fingers like a clergyman's daughter that has quarrelled with her parents, go and do the nice to him, ask him aboard, and give him a peg or two. Tell him you are cargo officer, and you've been sitting up nights nursing his particular lot through the dangers of typhoons and waterspouts—you can do it all right, no one better—that his stuff is in first-rate condition, and the cases aren't even cracked. Then, *then*, my friend, you'll see where the cargo officer comes in."

"But I thought," said the fourth doubtfully, "that the Chinese didn't drink anything stronger than tea."

"You can't expect me to be interested in what you think about Chinamen, when I've been trad-

ing with them for getting on ten years," Briggs protested. "Don't drink indeed! why, they wallow in it, saturate themselves—I should be ill for a month if I drank one tenth part of what I've seen a Chink put away in this cabin. Why, man, they simply—well, they drink nearly as much as you do yourself," Briggs cheerfully lied.

"I can see," objected the fourth, "clearly where the Chinks come in. I can see also, though doubtless you haven't noticed it yourself, where you come in; but where I come in doesn't appear so clear and defined as I could wish. Of course, if they do give me the cases of whisky, O.K., but if they don't——"

At this point the discussion was interrupted by a cough, and in strolled the third officer; Warren having been too engrossed in the conversation to wonder why he had not heard footsteps approach the door.

"Can't leave it alone, I see," commented Butterson; "now, when I was fourth, I never touched it after leaving Singapore, so as to be fit for Shanghai, and if you take my advice you'll do the same. Here, Briggs, give us one of my own brand," turning to the steward, "some of the lot I got from Ching Chong; that's real good stuff, and you didn't give me half

enough for those ten cases, you robber. Now, here am I buying it back at three times the price."

"Seeing you didn't give anything for it and you wanted the money so bad," replied Briggs hotly, "I reckon ten dollars a case a very good offer ; besides, you couldn't have taken it ashore and sold it."

"True, true ; well, we both did well, so don't let's quarrel."

That night the fourth turned in with his boots on his feet and a pleasant feeling of anticipation in his heart.

Next morning he was surprised at the polite treatment he received at the hands of both the third officer and the steward, the former even going so far as to offer room for the first three or four cases in their joint cabin, "though," as he explained, "you will have to arrange with Briggs to take the bulk of it ; there is nothing like enough room here."

During that evening Warren, for the first time, bought drinks for both Butterson and Briggs, causing the latter to drop and break a glass in his excitement.

The plot was proving a success.

In proportion as the distance from Shanghai decreased, so the fourth officer's excitement grew,

as also did the bundle of I O U's, each new one of which represented one additional piece of information from the conspirators.

It was only when the good ship was made fast alongside the wharf in Shanghai that things came to a head. The fourth officer was considered by the local Chinese to be one of the most affable and generous gentlemen that had ever appeared at that busy trade centre. His enthusiasm was only temporarily checked even when he discovered that a silk-gowned Chinaman, who answered to the description supplied by the steward, except for the gold-mounted fan, after consuming the best part of a bottle of Napier Johnstone, was a tailor's tout.

Accidents will happen. However, nothing daunted, he tackled a portly gentleman clothed in silk whom he found gazing into the hold. This time he felt sure of his prey, and taking the presumed donor of cases of whisky into his cabin, brought out the bottle.

His guest, however, could not speak a word of English, but realized with smile and bow that his host wished him to drink, which, nothing loth, he prepared to do by pouring out half a tumbler of whisky, whereupon Warren, concealing his painful emotions as best he

could, signed to him to take some water. Misunderstanding him, the Chinaman proceeded to fill up the glass from the sadly depleted whisky bottle, and raising the former to his lips, drained it before he could be prevented. Then he sat down suddenly on the locker with a face expressive of surprise, horror, and the last extremity of fear, and after three or four apparently ineffectual struggles for breath, commenced, with staring eyes and purple face, to feel around with working fingers amongst the surrounding atmosphere for something which apparently he could not find, until, being overcome by the intensity of his feelings, he, to the best of his ability, seconded nature's efforts to restore his stomach to a normal state of ease and comfort.

This presumed consignee, who turned out to be the cook's brother, was taken to hospital on a stretcher, after a bulky cotton belt had been removed from his person, the contents of which belt, being ship's tea, were duly returned to the store-room.

Mr. Butterson's annoyance in the matter of the carpet was freely and pungently expressed. Warren's offers of prospective cases of whisky were ineffective in stemming the torrent of biting sarcasm : Whisky, phew ! he wanted no whisky, even the smell of it made him ill ;

the truth of which statement he had every opportunity of proving during the next few days, despite Jeyes' fluid liberally applied to the floor.

By noon on the seventh day, all cargo being cleared and everything ready for sailing at daylight next morning, both the steward and the third officer decided to go ashore, to leave, as they put it, grinning from ear to ear, the field clear for their shipmate to finish his business with the consignees, Mr. Briggs signifying his willingness for any cases of whisky to be put in his cabin for the night, as he was going to sleep ashore.

When the two plotters returned to the ship in the morning with the first faint streaks of dawn, they were met by a sallow-faced youth who introduced himself as the new fourth officer.

Mr. Briggs—the early morning light accentuating the pallor of his face, which was working with suppressed emotion—leaned weakly against the rail.

“Must have been very fond of him,” remarked the new arrival, with interest; “never seen a parting go so hard with any one before. Mr. Warren left a chit for Mr. Butterson and another for Mr. Briggs. Are you Mr. Briggs?” to the steward.

“I am Mr. Briggs,” assented the steward

thickly, "and this purple-faced, bleary-eyed—ah—accident is the third officer, Mr. Butterson, your sup—hup—superior officer, for whom you will, in future, show all the respect an' reverence you will find it quite im—poo—impossible to feel."

Mr. Briggs was not, strictly speaking, sober.

This somewhat irregular introduction having been effected, the steward opened his letter as if it might contain his death-warrant. The contents read :—

"DEAR MR. BRIGGS,—

"Regret I had no time to say goodbye, but have been too busy packing ; the old man having kindly agreed to exchange me with the bearer of this letter, who is going home to cure a touch of sprue, and I am taking over his job as second officer on the coast.

"Parting from old friends is always a sad business, but in this case I feel it more on account of your and the third officer's kindness and generosity to me, in giving me, a new hand, all the valuable information your good nature has led you both to supply, the outcome of your many years' experience on this run.

"The new man, having, as I say, a linger-

ing complaint, is not allowed to drink whisky, &c., but if you can see your way to supply him from time to time with those little luxuries so necessary to an invalid, I shall take it as a personal favour to myself.

“Sincerely yours,

“A. WARREN.”

“PS.—Sorry you were not here last night so that I could square up my I O U’s, but I have told Mr. Butters in my note to him, which he will doubtless show you, in confirmation, to sell all the whisky we are expecting, except two cases, which I hope you will accept from me as a token of my regard, and, after reimbursing himself the £3 I owed him, to pay all my I O U’s due to yourself and leave the balance in some safe bank to my credit—say the ‘Hongkong and Shanghai.’

“A. W.”

No sooner had the third officer mastered the contents of an epistle couched in similar terms of goodwill and generosity, than a loud “toot, toot” drew the attention of all three to a coasting steamer passing down river, upon the poop-rail of which was perched a well-known figure holding aloft a little white flag.

In spite of the difficulty this familiar figure experienced in retaining his balance, he was observed to wave a fond adieu to the *Chaunton*, letting it be seen, as well as he was able, that his kindly attention was particularly intended for the two persons standing, it must be confessed, somewhat dejectedly, aft, with a slip of paper fluttering in the hands of each as if in friendly response.

STALE MATE

THE scene of this story is laid in Shanghai twenty years ago, when Mercantile Marine officers were scarce, and a man could raise, and satisfy, a thirst without running the risk of being unable to satisfy his hunger after—when he lost his job. At the present day the choice lies between eating and drinking; and must be quickly decided. This, of course, makes the port much more business-like and much more dull. Trade is now much more dull also, but this they tell me is from a different cause altogether; and as they know infinitely more about it than I do, I may assume that they are right.

But enough of explanations: let us proceed with the yarn.

The chief engineer of the China Coast Steam Navigation Company's steamer *Poo Bah* was standing half in and half out of the front door of his house in Seward Road, block-

ing the light with his bulky frame ; possibly with the idea of assisting his friend, Bob Strange, the chief officer of the same Company's sister ship *Poo Hoo*, to see his way down the front steps, although it was a pitch-dark night and New Year's Eve, which festive occasion, to the best of my knowledge and belief, never has been the cause of any one seeing the better for its occurrence yet.

"Mind the step, Bob."

"Oh ai, I'm all right !"

"Good-night, Bob, old man."

"Good-ni—— What the blue and green and purple—— Oh, dammit ! Jack, why don't you keep your triple-expansion abortion of a cat tied up in its kennel, instead of leaving the stinking thing lying about in the dark? "

Bob's farewell had been interrupted by a hair-raising screech as he trod on the animal. He caught at a rose-bush to save himself, filled the inside of his hand with brambles, and, as he fell down the steps, he felt, just before the final solid bump, eight needle-like punctures in the skin of his leg, just above the boot.

"What's the matter, Bob? "

"Anything else struck? " enquired a shaky voice from the pavement.

"Struck? "

“ ‘Course ! didn’t you notice the lightning? ”

“ No. Are you hurt, Bob? ”

“ Ai.”

“ Well, you’d better come in an’ have a settler before you go, seein’ it’s New Year’s Eve.”

“ Ai,” Bob re-entered the house ; “ but the ship’s discharging cargo half the night, and I don’t like to leave it all to the second—you know what these young fellows are,” and the mate, who was very red in the face, and watery of eye, raised a suggestive elbow, winked, and nodded, but the fact that he had to put out a steadying hand to avoid falling on the table goes to prove that he rather overdid the nod.

This return to the house was the mate’s undoing, as the sequel shows.

Half an hour later his rotund figure might have been seen, but for the merciful darkness, wending its way down the steps with the most elaborate caution—backwards, on hands and knees, whilst every two or three seconds he pursed his lips and gave vent to a violent “ Shoo ! ”

His friend the chief engineer did not appear, but a sound not unlike the slow rise and fall of a rusty saw on hard wood floated through the open front door into the still night.

Despite his unlucky start, the mate was

so fortunate as to find a 'ricksha, which he entered at the second attempt. After giving the name of the wharf at which the *Poo Hoo* was berthed, he started merrily away, and—woke up three miles past his destination.

Having eloquently, and with superb technique, administered a rebuke to the 'ricksha coolie, who, of course, did not understand a word of the harangue, he started back again for the wharf, only to wake up again about a mile the other side of it, to find the 'ricksha held up by a policeman, on account of the coolie having no light.

Rather than risk another fruitless journey, he now paid the coolie, and walked back to his destination, only running into one pillar hydrant on the way. As it was in the depth of winter, this stand-pipe was wrapped in straw to prevent the water from freezing; seeing this, but evidently misunderstanding the reason for the straw, the mate rubbed his chin thoughtfully as he regarded it. Presently a pleased light broke over his features.

"Um—damn good idea!" he muttered, "Munic—hum—Council evidently know the game allri.'" With that he turned in at the wharf gates and walked down to the waterfront.

A fall over a head-rope which was lying in

his path, however, did not improve his temper ; still, picking himself up manfully, he made out the shape of the *Poo Hoo*, saw the string of lights between ship and godown indicating the line of "carry" for the cargo, and heard the "Hay-haw" song of the coolies. Hurrah ! he was home.

His instructions were to finish discharging, then go out into the stream and make fast to the buoys opposite the wharf.

Imagine his horror, as he reached the ship's side, when he noticed that the cargo, instead of being discharged, was being loaded. He steadied himself with his hand on a post, shook himself, cleared his throat, looked away for a moment, and then slowly brought his gaze back to the ship.

Yes ! there could be no doubt about it, the cargo *was* being put on board.

"Damn all second officers !" he muttered, as he made a dart forward, literally fuming with rage. The third step of his now heedless career, however, brought his shin into violent contact with a wire breast-rope, and over he went again ; a calamity which, of course, served to make him still more furious.

Rushing wildly down to the pontoon, he stopped the line of carrying coolies, and shouted

for his old acquaintance the "number one"—this being local parlance for ganger—whom he knew well could be made to understand.

Having found his man, he commenced, with most violent gesticulation and abuse, to demand an explanation as to why the cargo was being loaded instead of landed. "Captain talkee so fashion," answered the placid Chinaman.

Horrible thoughts of the skipper issuing wrong orders whilst under the influence of his festive cups flashed through the mate's mind. "Belong mistake," he roared; "you puttee cargo shoreside chop chop."

"All li," and away went the number one coolie, shouting at the top of his voice.

Five minutes later the cargo was being landed as rapidly as it was previously being loaded.

The mate climbed aboard, his feelings too strong for words, till, seeing one of the Chinese quartermasters in the gloom, he shouted, "Send the second officer here."

"Second officer have go ashore," replied the man.

"Ho, ho!" fumed the mate; "that accounts for it."

Seeing that everything was now going smoothly, he decided to go to his cabin and lie down for a while to await the second officer.

After considerable difficulty he found his key and opened the door, but was doubtful as to whether, after all his trouble, the door had been really locked ; for no sooner had he put the key in the keyhole and turned the handle than the door opened of its own accord. After puzzling over this for some time, he decided to give it up for the present, and enquire of the boy in the morning.

The next difficulty was matches.

Now matches invariably do move to a different place in the dark, as everybody having the slightest capacity for observation is aware, and the present instance was no exception ; so, having none in his pocket, the mate had to abandon the idea of obtaining a light.

" If I can't have a light, I'll have another drink instead," murmured he, as he felt around for his cupboard.

But the cupboard had moved also.

His search for the whisky, however, was much more persevering and methodical than the one for the matches, and was at length rewarded. Having had a stiffer peg than he intended, owing to being obliged to help himself in the dark, he essayed to place the waterbottle back in the rack, but discovered after some time that he had been trying to hang it up on a nail ; and, as he

also found to his disgust that the cupboard had moved a second time, he owned himself beaten, placed both bottles on the floor, and turned into the bunk.

Even this had moved, and, worse still, continued to do so—after he got into it—in a circular direction ; moreover, the bunk seemed smaller ; or had he left some clothes in it before going ashore ?

“ Pah ! teetotaller after this ! ” he muttered, pushing something out of the way with his feet ; “ this won’t do at—hip—at—hup—at all. Damn that boy of mine ; hasn’t even ma—hup—mad—hip. Oh, hell ! ” and after plunging his feet about again to get more room for them, he fell asleep, knowing that he would be called when the ship was ready to go off to the buoy.

* * * * *

“ *Hi ; on deck !* ”

The mate sat up suddenly, bumped his head against the top board of the bunk, rubbed his eyes, and stared into the face of another man who was also sitting up in the same bunk, and had apparently been sleeping in his bed, but at the opposite end.

The face he was staring at was strangely familiar, in spite of the fact that it was scratched and covered with dried mud.

The eyes of the second man were even more bloodshot than his own, which fact, taken together with the scratches and mud, rendered his appearance positively hideous.

For a full minute the bedfellows stared at each other with surprise so intense that each was bereft of speech ; then the object of the mate's astonished gaze slowly raised his hand to his apparently throbbing and certainly mud-smeared head and murmured enquiringly, " Bob Strange? "

" Ai," Bob nodded, somewhat doubtfully, and continued, " You're Joe Evans, aren't you, mate of the *Poo Bah*? "

" That's me," answered the gentleman addressed.

" Good-morning," said Bob, for he could think of nothing else to say.

" Good-morning," replied Joe mechanically, and for a similar reason.

Bob looked round the cabin with dazed, glassy eyes.

" This isn't my cabin ! "

Joe looked at him with an expression of exaggerated admiration, somewhat obscured, it is true, by mud, but nevertheless quite unmistakable.

" Marvellous ! " he asserted, with bated

breath ; " how did you manage to find that out? "

A feeling akin to nausea began to steal over Bob as the events of the previous evening slowly returned to his mind in their proper sequence. He looked at his companion beseechingly.

" Then this is the *Poo Bah?* "

" Positively astounding," commented his tormentor ; " even the most difficult problems seem to be mere child's play. What a head the man must have ! "

" That's no lie," agreed Bob, pressing his fevered brow. " Where's my ship? "

" Out at the buoys ; I took your berth last night."

Bob groaned ; his worst fears were confirmed. His companion, however, seemed to think the matter extremely humorous, for he tumbled out of the bunk with a smile of amusement on his face, and immediately trod on the bottle that Bob had laid on the floor the evening previous. As his foot touched this, however, his expression changed—slowly but thoroughly. He looked accusingly at Bob, who smiled a sickly smile and murmured affably, " Help yourself."

" Help myself indeed ! damn it all, it's my bottle ! "

"Is it?" enquired his late bedfellow innocently; "I quite thought it was mine."

"Thought!" replied Joe, with withering contempt; "you *thought*, you thought—pah! you'd better go and have yourself seen to. Hello!" as he caught sight of his reflection in the glass, and stood spellbound; "what's the matter with my face?"

"Damn dirty!" replied Bob, glad of a chance to get even, "positively disgusting. You must have forgotten to wipe it on the mat as you came in last night."

"Did you take your boots off before you turned in with me?" Joe enquired.

"Of course," Bob lied shamelessly.

"Well, it's time you got your boots mended, if they let the mud in like that."

"My boots are all right," asserted Bob indignantly.

"Holy smoke! then it's quite time you got your socks washed, or beaten, or scraped, if you haven't another pair; look at my face."

"Don't ask me to do that," pleaded Bob with a shudder; "I've already seen it once, and I don't feel very well. It was—ugh!—it was horrible."

"So would yours be, idiot, if it was used as a doormat by every drunken, red-headed sailor that can't find his way home."

"Not so hideous as that," Bob pointed with his finger, but kept his head turned the other way ; "part of it's natural—the worst part ; I don't mind mud."

Bob was beginning to feel considerably better.

"You leave my face alone, Bob Strange !"
Joe was furious.

"It is quite safe, so far as I'm concerned, unless, of course, you care to have it cleaned ; but I know that isn't likely. Say, Joe, how many months has the *Poo Bah* been short o' water? "

Joe eyed his companion up and down, but despite his fury, he was reminded that Bob was nearly twice his size. He relapsed into a chilling silence for a moment, and then resumed freezingly, "Would you be so kind as to take your beastly self out of my cabin? I want to wash."

"You certainly do," agreed Bob meaningly, "but don't forget the Harbour Regulations," with which caution he stepped out on deck, closing the door carefully behind him.

Once in the outer air his brain began to work rapidly. The ship, as he noticed, was still discharging, so he called for the number one coolie, and engaged him in earnest conversation. After some considerable argument,

the number one made a rapid calculation, and held out his hand. Bob placed two ten-dollar bills in it, which he followed up with another for five.

"No wanchee any man talkee nothing," he said.

"All li, Mr. Stlange."

* * * * *

Five minutes later, when the mate of the *Poo Bah* stepped out on deck, the cargo was being loaded again with the utmost despatch.

"Everything all right?" enquired Joe Evans of the number one, who was standing by.

"Evelething all li, Mr. Evans," that inscrutable Chinaman replied.

Just then Bob emerged from the wharfinger's house, wiping his lips with a handkerchief, sounds of hearty laughter from the residence following his retreating form. As he left the door, he put one finger to his nose and called back "Fred!"

"Hello!" replied a voice from inside the house.

"Mum."

"Mum it is," agreed the voice.

And mum it has been ever since, till now; but Bob is skipper of an Australian ship at present, so that the telling doesn't matter.

THE ODD TRICK

JACK BELTON is representative of the type of man that never "gets on well" with other men. With women, however, he is far more successful—for a time; but somehow the day invariably comes round when a jarring note is struck—a vague, hesitating aloofness on the part of the woman, a shrinking fear, an arrested confidence manifests itself. Generally speaking, this occurs at a sufficiently early stage of intimacy for the woman's interest to turn into indifference; sometimes, but more rarely, it is so long delayed that her misplaced trust turns into either active, vengeful hate, or stunned, maimed helplessness.

The woman sitting with Jack Belton in the Shanghai Hotel is on the threshold of disillusion; she is fighting with herself, as all women do fight for their happiness; trying to convince herself against reason that there are excuses for him, striving with pathetic futility to coax her

brain, her reason, to follow her physical instinct, her passions ; and the result is a hopeless, dull heartache, for her mind has regained control over a desire dulled by satiety, and is no longer excited by the rose-tinted imagery of ungratified craving.

He who was her hero, is now—what? She watches him, musing but intent ; her half-closed eyes following every passing shadow of expression that the lamp-light reveals on his face ; for she is in the shadow, and the object of her critical regard is seated at the centre table, upon which is a lamp, the yellow light from which throws up into high relief the startlingly handsome countenance of the man.

Jack Belton is absorbed in his work. He has a new pack of cards in his hand, which he deals into two piles, one receiving the aces and court cards, and the other those of lower denomination. The sorting complete, he takes from a little leather case a small screw clamp, in which he places the court cards, and screws them tightly down with their edges exactly level. Next comes a piece of broken looking-glass, the keen edge of which he rubs repeatedly across the upper ends of the tightly held cards, again going through the process with the lower ends. This procedure is repeated with the other

pile, the only difference being that their sides are shaved instead of their ends.

The shaved sides and ends are now polished with a chamois leather.

Taking the entire pack in his delicate, nervous hands, he then shuffles them with lightning-like rapidity and thoroughness, and stacking them on the table, cuts the pack by placing his fingers and thumb to the sides of the cards. He cuts an ace. Shuffling again, and again cutting in a similar way, he cuts a queen.

The next cut is made by holding the short edges, or ends of the cards—the top and bottom of the pack. By gripping them thus he obtains a three, and then a seven, which appear to satisfy him. He continues to practise both methods of cutting for some time, and invariably when he grips the ends of the cards he obtains one of low denomination, but when he holds the sides of the pack he is equally certain of cutting an ace or a court card.

The next operation is begun by holding each card in the steam that issues from a small kettle resting upon a spirit lamp, and which is boiling furiously, until the face of the card is loosened from the back—for they are made of two layers of cardboard, pressed one on top of the other—and completed by passing a fine needle through

the separated back in a spot that is selected according to the face value of the card.

By this ingenious device he can tell, by touching the back of any card with his sensitive fingers, the exact value of such card, according to the position of the tiny needle prick ; yet, when dried, rejoined, and pressed, it shows no needle hole if held up to the light, because the needle did not penetrate the entire card, but only one layer of cardboard forming the back.

Playing cards with Jack Belton is not a profitable pastime, except to Jack Belton himself.

The woman sitting on the settee is remarkably pretty in her soft, appealing, almost supplicating way. There is, judging by her appearance, practically no strength in her character. This deduction is confirmed by her situation as we find her. She is a woman who places her two palms together and looks at a man with uplifted chin and half closed eyes—the call of sex weakness to strength, pitiful because unguarded, and prone to be blindly trustful till too late.

With her it has always been too late ; but she is being educated, and Jack Belton is her present tutor—the second.

After ten minutes have elapsed, during which

Belton totally ignores her, she sits up suddenly on the settee, straightening her back. Her eyes harden.

"Jack, I can't stand any more of this ; I can't ! really I shall go mad. Let me go."

"What's the trouble now? "

"Everything !—your neglect ; do you think I came to you for a life like this? "

"Don't see anything wrong with the life. Haven't you everything you want, and a lot more than most get—your kind? " he answers brutally.

"My kind? " her face is deathly white.

"Yes, your kind—at the beginning, of course. Later on they have jewels, and carriages, and an extensive knowledge of the world, especially that part of it which is most unpleasant."

"Ah ! "

"Suppose you—er—throw up your present situation, what do you propose to do? "

"I don't know."

"Naturally. But what do you imagine? "

"Find a man—a man who is neither cheat, rogue, nor fiend."

"If you do, do you really suppose he would want you—now? "

"Then I'll try the jewels, carriages, and—face the end. I should prefer it to this."

"Where do you propose to go?"

"Home, via Japan."

"You are aware, of course, that I was unlucky on the voyage out, and lost heavily in Hongkong. Have you any money?"

"I? No."

"Then I am afraid you must fold your wings for the present, till the luck turns. You know that we owe the hotel \$350?"

"Yes."

"Well, I have just one hundred pounds, which means that we must leave the hotel without depleting our capital. This we will do by a method I learned, amongst other things, in America. We can discuss the other matter later. There is nothing to be made here. We must quarrel violently, which will require hardly an effort on your part, and as for me, well, I shall enjoy it. To-morrow you will run away, taking your luggage with you, and as much of mine as you can cram into your boxes. You will leave a note for me, which note I will dictate to you: all in accordance with the properly authenticated methods of the stage and sixpenny novel, and wait for me in Japan. The Nagasaki Hotel, Moji, will do admirably. There I will give you what I can spare, and send you home to complete your education."

In the dining-room that night, the guests notice that Mrs. Belton dines alone until the third course, and leaves the table immediately upon her husband's arrival ; favouring him with a look of defiant hate as she departs. Mr. Belton appears to be greatly upset, stares stupidly after his wife for a moment, and then goes in chase. There is something of a scene by the manager's office in the hallway, but, finding his wife obdurate, Belton implores her not to let the entire hotel know their private affairs, and returns dejectedly to the table, alone.

Next morning Mr. Belton goes out on important business. One hour afterwards, Mrs. Belton, showing signs of great agitation, almost amounting to hysteria, gives orders for her luggage to be taken to the Customs jetty in order to catch the mail for Japan.

The manager, being a business man and tactful, approaches her with a bill, only to be referred to her husband.

"Your husband is out, madam."

"He will be back to tiffin. He is not going ; I leave alone."

"But——"

"Please, please do not worry me now ; you—ah—surely, you are not troubled about your wretched bill? My husband deposited all his

money with you, I believe? His luggage is here. Please go away," and Mrs. Belton stamps her foot and shows signs of increasing agitation, whereat the manager, recollecting a sealed package that Mr. Belton had given him for safe keeping, departs to make sure that the money is still in the safe, with a shrug of his shoulders and a muttered thanksgiving that he is a single man.

The package is still in the safe.

As Mrs. Belton departs on the tender alone, the hotel runner whispers to a rival attached to another hotel, and they both laugh, covering their mouths with their hands.

Mrs. Belton's agitation is extreme ; her nervous agitation continues till the tender is out in the stream and churning away to Woosung.

Strange to say, however, before Pheasant Point is reached she has regained her normal manner, and is even observed to smile twice under the calming influence of the sunny radiance of a well-known local sportsman, who is full of champagne and other bubbling joys at the prospect of nine months' home leave. As the tender goes alongside the steamer, the lady is sitting on one of the lifebuoy seats, her palms are together again, her chin tilted, and her appealing eyes at work, with every indication

of success, upon the said local taipan, who, after twenty years of disappointment in everything except money, chuckles "*At last!*"

Jack Belton's return to the hotel, at 11 p.m., is pitiful—the strong man in his grief. Why didn't the manager "do something"? He might have known!—and so on, till that harassed man is on the verge of bad temper himself.

For two days Belton is as a man distraught. On the third he calls the manager and informs him that he will follow his wife, even to the ends of the earth; tenders a request for his bill to be brought to him on the morrow, and gives notice that he will vacate his room at midday.

On the morrow at daylight, however, Belton is off the Saddle Islands en route for Japan, and the manager sadly transfers half a packet of toilet paper from the safe to its proper place.

On arrival at Nagasaki, Belton tiffins at the Japan Hotel, engages a 'ricksha with two coolies, and having climbed over the beautiful Tagami pass, drops into Moji.

On reaching the Nagasaki Hotel, which, it will be remembered, is situate on the right arm of the bay, he is surprised to find a pretty little Japanese girl waiting to welcome him instead of his "wife."

"Foreign lady no got?" enquires Belton,

using pidgin English for lack of a better exchange.

"There is no foreign lady here," answers the mousme, "but there are four girls." Her English is perfect.

"Foreign girls?"

"Oh no, *only* Japanese," and there is more than a suggestion of sarcasm about the "only."

"Damn!"

"You don't like Japanese girls?" the mousme enquires with her little head on one side, as she shows her brilliant teeth in a winning smile.

But Belton's thoughts are with his clothes, and his one hundred sovereigns, far, far away—*somewhere*.

A FO'C'S'LE PHILOSOPHER

OLD Jimmie has led a sober and regular life as engineers' storekeeper on one ship—the S.S. *Culveston*, trading between London and China, ever since that ship was built, fifteen years ago.

His groove is narrow and deep, and his habits unchangeable, for their roots are buried under fifteen years' silt of the sands of time. He has the head of a venerable, white-haired philosopher, the hands of an aged ape, and the heart of a love-compelling child.

As becomes a man of his temperament, his mind reaches out after intellectual food and exercise on all those occasions when he is engaged upon tasks of regularly monotonous incidence, the performance of which has become so mechanical by the flux of time as to require hardly a brain effort.

This explains why old Jimmie's eyes light up with anticipation as he approaches a port, for he is a politician of no mean order ; and a goodly

portion of his meagre earnings is spent at the first opportunity in the purchase of home papers containing the Parliamentary reports.

In the fo'c's'le he is Judge of the Final Court of Appeal in political matters ; which title he has defended for fifteen years. As other aspirants, mostly of the loud-voiced, table-banging type, have from time to time been quietly, yet with ju-jitsu adroitness and efficiency, held down helpless in argument, so respect for old Jimmie's apparently irresistible power to nail home and clamp his contentions has increased amongst his shipmates with each successive occasion on which he has been called upon to defend his claim to the title.

His success in every such instance has been complete, absolute, and unquestionable ; for his opponent has invariably joined the circle of the admiring, acquiescent fo'c's'le audience upon any subsequent rare occasion when old Jimmie could be led into argument.

Repeated and uninterrupted success, however, has made old Jimmie bold and sweeping in the scope he gives to his ideas ; he has, I fear, contracted an inflamed swelling of those faculties of his that conceive schemes for world betterment ; which has prompted him to push his mind-pictures of reform beyond the boundaries

of precedent, into an airy locality of imagination so remote from the mundane that any forecast of their utility could only be speculative.

Hence the facile development, or degeneration, according to political view-point, of old Jimmie into an uncompromising Socialist of the most extreme order.

I introduced myself to him on the occasion of my last trip to Shanghai. Old Jimmie was plaiting packing for the engineers, about four feet of this useful material being suspended from one of the awning spreaders, and Jimmy, with his thoughts far away, was interlacing the strands as I approached.

"Good-morning. When do you expect to reach Shanghai?" I questioned.

"Er—Tuesday morning, about ten," he answered.

"I hear," I ventured, "that you are interested in politics, Mr.—?"

"They call me Jimmie, sir."

"May I?" I questioned. "You see, I am not quite like the ordinary passenger; I, at one time, when I was even more hard up than at present, worked my passage on this run."

"Why, certainly, sir, if you wish it."

"Thank you, Jimmie, and, if you could oblige me further by doing without the sir——"

"Oh," interrupted Jimmie, with a broad smile that was good to see, "as to that, Mr. Denby, that's business, only business; I've read some of your writings, and—well, you know, Mr. Denby, really now—" and Jimmie became deeply concerned with the packing.

"You don't agree with them, eh?"

"Oh, it ain't that exactly," old Jimmie looked at me severely; "but if I had your opportunities"—and he stopped, at a loss for a word to convey his sense of the enormity of my sins of omission, but his expression as he rolled his eyes heavenward quite adequately remedied the deficiency.

"Well, you see, Jimmie, I have made no study of politics," I humbly admitted.

"That's just it, Mr. Denby; just exactly the point."

"But," I expostulated, "surely everybody cannot study politics?"

"If everybody said that, Mr. Denby, where should we get to? You have a vote?"

"Two," I admitted apologetically.

"You use them?"

"Yes."

"And don't study politics at all?"

"No."

"Pah!"

I felt as if I had shrunk. Old Jimmie worked round his packing inch by inch, and finally stood with his toil-bowed old back to me and remained there.

“Jimmie !”

“Sir?”

“Don’t call me ‘sir,’” I objected, with, I fear, some irritation; “it sounds—well, never mind; don’t do it.”

“Business,” muttered Jimmie, “just business.”

“I wonder,” I remarked cuttingly, “that you can stand there and look me in the face—in the face,” I repeated pointedly to Jimmie’s back, “and call yourself a politician, when you haven’t, apparently, even an elementary idea as to what a politician’s duties are.”

The bait took; Jimmie positively jumped round.

“Perhaps you will inform me?”

“Certainly; as you desire it.” The light of battle illuminated Jimmie’s eyes as I continued: “A politician’s duty, Jimmie, is to convince others of their political shortcomings: to exhort, cajole, influence, and instruct them, and to induce them to vote in a manner desirable and advantageous to his party. It is thus empires are made and unmade; thus war lashes

men's passions to slaughter and rapine ; thus the gentle, healing influence of peace is invited to soothe the suffering and balm the wounds of the combatants ; thus——” and I stood up and removed my hat, dramatically waving my arm toward the Union Jack that was fluttering astern within ten feet of us, “ that emblem that seems such a fragile thing ” (our flag *was* a fragile thing, and four days later blew to pieces) “ stands for all that is great, strong, glorious, and honest in its might.” I hastily applied my handkerchief to my brow. “ Oh, Jimmie, if only I were a politician ; if only I had half your political knowledge ! Oh, Jimmie, Jimmie——” and looking at him with melancholy reproach, I sank down on a bollard with a heavy sigh and covered my eyes with my hands.

Glancing cautiously between my fingers, I studied Jimmie's face. It was worth while.

“ It's no use trying to convince some people,” he murmured at length ; but there was a questioning lilt in his voice that gave me hope.

“ Oh, Jimmie, Jimmie ! ” I remonstrated in a voice of sorrow ; “ if every one said that, where *should* we get to ? ”

“ Of course, if you'd like to hear my views——” Jimmie looked at me with raised eyebrows.

"Like?" I replied hotly; "like, forsooth; after the way you put it, I consider it is my duty to acquire what knowledge is available, with the object of using my two votes—*two* votes—to the best advantage."

"Well, you see, Mr. Denby, Socialism is a legislation designed to secure the greatest good to the greatest number. Work is to be limited to the individual, so that wages shall reach a larger number of men. Those in receipt of incomes will be divided into ten divisions. A sliding scale of income tax, increased for each division, will preclude the possibility of enormous incomes, as a man cannot draw any income at all if he is so wealthy as to qualify for the tenth degree."

"But by that you would shut down the sources of employment; it wouldn't be worth an employer's while——"

Old Jimmie regarded me with pity.

"Can't you see that this would simply have the effect of reducing him to the sixth or eighth degree?"

"Oh."

"Having settled the labour question," Jimmie waved his hand airily, "we come to the National Physique problem, which must be dealt with logically—all sentiment apart. The necessity for

this is made obvious by the fact that 30 per cent. of our would-be army recruits are perforce rejected. All sickly and unsound children must be destroyed——”

I gasped ; Jimmie continued firmly, with out-thrust jaw : “ And only those who can pass a medical examination be allowed to breed offspring. The propagation of their kind by habitual criminals and the unemployable must be rendered impossible. By these simple methods that fearsome scourge—consumption—would be wiped out completely in two generations, together with cancer, and several other horrible diseases, and both crime and lack of employment would be reduced by 90 per cent. In fact, I am of opinion that there should be professional breeders——”

“ Hold on, Jimmie,” I interrupted aghast, clasp ing my throbbing head with my hands ; “ what in the name of domestic bliss are professional breeders ? ”

“ Professional breeders,” explained old Jimmie, “ are men and women selected with the utmost care on account of their physical fitness for the post, and are to be kept, and fed—well fed—at Government expense.”

“ But, Jimmie, do you seriously suppose that any one would consent to be made into a kind of—er—human incubator ? ”

“ Well, of course, the idea would require a lot of getting used to ; you see, it’s all strange at present to our custom-hardened minds, but I dunno—if any one had said to me in my young days, ‘ Jimmie, you have been selected for this important position ’—well, I dunno,” and Jimmie gazed across the sunlit sea with an expression that left no doubt as to what his answer would have been in such case.

I am at a loss to assign a reason for it, but the fact remains that my thoughts at that moment drifted to a little girl I knew in Shanghai, and of whom I had hopes—but there, the girl has nothing to do with this story.

Old Jimmie’s voice broke in upon my reverie :—

“ And about your two votes, Mr. Denby? ”

“ My two votes, Jimmie, are my two votes still ; and if ever you get into Parliament ”—I looked at him with concentrated ferocity—
“ Jimmie, I’ll—I’ll brain you with an axe.”

Professional breeders indeed !

SAME OLD THING

THE Fathead, having nothing in the world to do but enjoy himself expensively, naturally began to deteriorate. His father didn't object to his doing nothing, but disapproved of that nothing being done in an altogether unworkmanlike way.

Of course, wild oats, &c., but the crop was extensive, and poor in *quality*; so he sent him round the world.

On his travels, the Fathead discovered that an extra peg or two caused the time to hang less heavily. As a result of this he got the *jumps*.

At first he jumped when anything moved unexpectedly; then he jumped when anything moved; then he jumped when he *thought* anything moved; so, when the ship reached Colombo, they put him in hospital, and the captain, crew, and passengers were *glad*.

Next morning he woke up feeling *rotten*. Some one was trying to grind up his head with

a big granite boulder ; he dared not turn over in case he fell out of bed, and he dared not open his eyes because two little devils with sharp nails, who had somehow got inside his head, were trying to push them out from the back in order to escape.

Presently he felt a cool hand laid upon his forehead, and a voice said " Poor boy ! " quite softly.

Now, when any one had spoken of the Fathead lately, it had been as some nasty kind of beast, and he had generally heard, but didn't mind a bit. But this girl's voice was *altogether* different somehow, and he tried hard to think just what the difference was, but it only made his head worse.

It was this that made him open his eyes and look at the nurse. He found that she was *very* pretty.

Of course she wasn't pretty, at all—at least, not very ; but he didn't know this, he *thought* she was. Understand?

And when she gave him a drink, he *enjoyed* that drink, though as a matter of fact it was mostly bromide. Soon after this the girl discovered a *look* in his eyes.

They weren't bad eyes, really, even if they were a bit puffy.

Now this is a peculiar thing—directly she saw that look, she blushed ; and almost immediately after, looked in the glass to see if her hair was all right. This blush made her *really* pretty.

Why she blushed, Heaven only knows, unless of course it was because she knew the look ; although she had never seen it before, and no one had ever told her about it.

Still she *knew* ; understand?

Another strange thing was that whenever she was nice to him, he used to get a *lump* in his throat, which was a thing he hadn't felt for—oh ! ages. Utterly absurd, of course, because she was only doing her duty ; but this didn't make any difference to the lump. Lumps don't care anything about duty.

When he was better—ready to go away—he went into the girl's room to thank her. It was easy enough to go in, but when he got there he *couldn't* remember the beautiful little speech he had prepared. Just ordinary thanks wouldn't do somehow, but then he didn't know how the devil to find any other kind, especially as she wouldn't help him, or even look at him. In fact, she kept her head turned the other way.

So he bent down, and found that she was crying, which gave him some more trouble with

his throat, and he got fidgety ; so he took her by the hands and looked right into her eyes, only to find that although there were tears there, she wasn't *really* crying at all. At least, not in that way ; so he kissed her ; which shows that he wasn't a fathead *quite* all the time.

Much to his surprise, she didn't mind a *bit*, so he tried again, and didn't *hurry* over it either.

Finding that even this didn't annoy her, that is, of course, not *really*, he asked for her hand, and went as white as a sheet, like a fathead would, till she promised it, and all the rest of her that was attached to it.

Now that he is Mrs. Fathead's husband, he laughs nearly all day ; but of course he is *altogether* different now, for he is fat all over, and the time doesn't hang heavily at all—in fact, there doesn't seem half enough.

THE ALCOHORCHID

MR. RAMUZ, the celebrated orchid-grower of Kensington, was reputed to have made an enormous fortune by dealing in rare specimens of this wonderful plant, besides which it was known that he conducted a world-wide and successful trade in seeds and rare tubers. He it was who introduced the famous "Splay" potato, and in spite of the fact that he had eight specimens, single eyes, if well formed, fetched, as will be remembered, three hundred pounds apiece and more.

Then came the notorious "Alcohorchid," and less successful dealers talked of "lucky Ramuz" again.

The actual discoverer of the specimen that was given this peculiar appellation was a collector named Voss, whose death during an attack of delirium tremens on the voyage home from the field of his labours lent a peculiar significance to the name, especially as Voss him-

self named the plant, and insisted on the retention of the curious title by Mr. Ramuz, to whom the collector despatched the specimens shortly before he entered upon the drinking bout which put an end to his career.

That Voss knew the peculiar and really extraordinary properties of this orchid there seems no doubt, since Captain Knoch, of the *Culveston*, who brought him (Voss) home, told several people of the weird yarns with which the collector would regale him after dinner, till intoxication so far overcame him that his speech became unintelligible.

This accounts for the captain dismissing such stories from his mind as the fancies of a drunken and highly imaginative exaggerator. Probability of the truth of at least some of these stories was, however, demonstrated at the dinner given by Mr. Ramuz to a select circle of friends to celebrate his find, and the exceptional properties of the flower, under certain circumstances, were amply evidenced, as you will learn.

For the entertainment in question, which took place at Mr. Ramuz's house in Grosvenor Square, Mrs. Ramuz, who was a woman with social ambitions, had secured amongst others a Bishop, an M.P. who was a leading temperance advocate in the House ; Violet, Duchess of Heaton, the

Socialist peeress, who took up Socialism because the Jews refused to take any more of her paper, and whose estate was being "administered"; Lord Reine, who could make a living as a prizefighter, but who was otherwise unemployable, and, not being possessed of an adequate income, had been turned out by his mother to arrange a match with the wealthy daughter of any respectable tradesman, or select any alternative method of getting a living, other than that of sawdust, blood, and bumps; but whose matrimonial chances were handicapped firstly by a broken nose, which had been set by an amateur in Greco-Roman style—Greco on one profile and Roman on the other—and secondly by an incomplete ear, the symmetry of which had been, so rumour had it, marred by a quart pot deftly thrown by an East End bookmaker.

Another noticeable guest was Mrs. Wiley, an American widow, young, handsome, and witty; who, having successfully buried a wealthy husband of unbearable temper and abominable disposition, was enjoying the reaction to the top of her bent.

In the early stages of the dinner, Ramuz, who was first and foremost a quietly practical business man, entertained the company with stories of the Alcohorchid, which were of sufficient interest to

ensure their being repeated, and thus serving as an advertisement. This business aptitude was, it afterwards transpired, quite superfluous, "Ramuz's dinner" being the chief topic of conversation in London, and even abroad, for many days following the date upon which it was eaten.

At the dinner in question the flowers themselves occupied the chief position, being set in an elaborate electro-plate *épergne*, which formed the centrepiece, and were placed with their petals outwards facing the guests.

The orchid itself was a plant having blooms shaped somewhat like a slipper, and with remarkably fleshy petals, of which there were three outer ones and apparently three inner, two at the top and one beneath in each case, the inner ones being at present tightly closed.

The blooms, in point of colour, justly claimed a premier position in the floral kingdom.

Try to imagine, from my necessarily inadequate description, a thick, fleshy blossom, three inches high by two inches broad, upon which all the primary colours had been dabbed at regular intervals with the finest water-colour paint. These colours had then "run" into each other, and at the point of contact produced most bewilderingly beautiful tints and shades of every conceivable tone, which appeared to

change and glow with life, giving the fascinated onlooker glimpses and suggestions of distracting beauty, many of which colour contrasts the mind had never before conceived.

This was the Alcohorchid at first sight.

Having seated themselves, the attention of the guests was centred almost immediately upon the blossoms, Mrs. Wiley being so completely fascinated by the beauty of the flower that her utter indifference to all extraneous happenings and conversation called forth a rebuke from her hostess.

"My dear Mrs. Wiley," protested Mrs. Ramuz, "if you will persist in gazing at those flowers and neglecting your dinner, I shall have them removed until the meal is over."

"Dinner!" answered the widow scornfully. "Does one consider dinner when one is privileged to peep into the windows of heaven? Food! pshaw! although your menu is an epicurean triumph, faultlessly executed, in the presence of this divine flower the consideration of victuals is a grossly material intrusion into what should be a gossamer-light feast of the gods."

"Till such time," interjected Lord Reine, bending close, "as this otherwise unattractive world is compelled to let you go, food, you will

admit, is at least desirable, nay, by many considered necessary, and this grouse, Mrs. Wiley, is timed to the minute—that is to say, the copyright has expired just sufficiently long ago to give that developed tone that only the leading culinary artists know how to develop. There is a tide in the affairs of a grouse which, taken at the flood——”

The widow reluctantly removed her gaze from the flower and turned to the speaker.

“Lord Reine,” she said thoughtfully, “try to think of the thing you like best in the world.”

“I am—always,” replied Reine, looking deep into the widow’s grey eyes.

“No, no ; something attainable,” with just a slight flush.

“Go on,” Reine answered shortly, sticking out his lower jaw and not removing his gaze for a second.

“As I am only trying to convey an idea—a mental picture that can never materialize—to your mind,” continued the widow, raising her beautiful shoulders, “it will do. Now, secondly, imagine that which you dislike most earnestly, the most objectionable thing you can call to mind.”

Reine frowned, his mind instantly reverting

to Jenkenstein, one of the leading "note of hand without publicity" parasites.

"Now," resumed the widow, "imagine yourself in full enjoyment of your ideal——"

"Just a moment," interrupted Reine rudely, and closing his eyes, his face assumed an expression of ecstasy so pregnant with meaning that the widow hastily resumed :

"——when suddenly your *bête noire* thrusts itself upon you and interrupts your enjoyment ; how would you feel? "

"I should feel," rejoined Reine, deeply interested, "like totally destroying him and carrying you off."

"Well," replied the widow, "that is how I feel about your intruding your revolting talk of decayed food into my contemplation of the alcohorchid."

At this Reine was about to give vent to a deep sigh, but hastily remembering the grouse, checked himself and took an olive.

"There is," resumed Reine, who was both financially and amatively anxious to continue the dialogue, "but one thing more important than food, which is essential to life, and that is the pursuit of those delights which make life worth living, and without which life is obviously not worth encouragement. In this category I, personally, rank love first."

"Love, without a qualifying adjective," replied the widow, "implies a dangerous vagabondage, neither stale nor flat, but distinctly unprofitable."

"It is precisely that vagabond state against which I hold an interested brief," insisted Reine, moving his chair boldly widowwards; "allow me to suggest that husbands—although I admit their shortcomings and long-stayings—in this respect at least supply a long-felt want to wives and ladies who have sufficient sense to abhor spinsterhood, which the majority, good luck to 'em, have."

"There is only one thing," answered the widow, thoughtfully contemplating the alcohorchid, "that requires greater care in selection than one's first husband, and that is—a second one."

"With one notable exception," objected Reine.

"And that is?"

"A lover," asserted Reine decisively.

The widow raised her delightful shoulders with a Parisian wealth of expression, and pointedly resumed her interrupted study of the alcohorchid.

Even the M.P., who was usually the acme of breeding and manners, was positively rude

to a neighbour who distracted his attention from the bloom.

Mr. Ramuz here claimed everybody's attention, by remarking in a loud tone, after glancing at his watch, "At eight o'clock, as nearly as I can calculate, the inner petals of the orchid should open. This has never before happened in England, and should we, as I hope, be so fortunate as to see into the heart of the flower to-night, we shall be the only white people, besides Voss, who have ever done so."

The words were hardly spoken, when, like the eyes of a waking child, the beautiful and fascinating flower unfolded its centre petals, the outer ones turning completely back, and giving place to the inner set.

The colouring of these petals was, if possible, more bewilderingly lovely than that of those they replaced. In the new petals, not a single primary colour was visible, but such delicately simple blending of the palest flush tints shyly showed themselves, that Ramuz whispered, in a husky voice: "This is the most beautiful thing that the eyes of man have ever seen."

The pistil exposed by the newly-opened petals appeared to be dead white, and composed of minute cells. The perfume from these cells was first noticed by the Duchess, and, as

it subsequently transpired, she was the first to be affected by it.

The effect of this powerful and entirely novel perfume was that of an excitant of sensibility. An æsthetic such as the Bishop, for instance, inhaled the scent with half-closed eyes, his rigid mental rule deposed in a moment, giving place to excited animalism. The perfume induced a species of exultant intoxication. A victim of the alcohorchid first threw off all restraint and conventionality. This stage was followed by an insistent bubbling excitement which forced an outlet or relief in mischievous or grotesque actions, the victim's nature being temporarily transmogrified into the antithesis of the normal. After this came an irresistible desire to sleep.

Before those present realized that anything serious had occurred, the conversation grew into a roar, punctuated by loud and unrestrained bursts of unreasonable laughter. Mr. Ramuz dismissed the servants after ordering more wine, and instructed them to serve no more food. The impassiveness of the old butler was taxed to its fullest extent, but as he felt highly elated himself, he ceased to wonder until about 11.30, until which time he slept soundly, having previously told the other servants on no account to enter the room.

Meanwhile the dining-room presented a scene of the most violent uproar and confusion. The Bishop, hiccoughing continually, was standing in his place, preaching most earnestly to a blanc-mange ; exhorting it with maudlin tears to pause before it was too late ; and, in spite of the fact that the handsome sweet obeyed him—except for a slight trembling—worked himself up into a state of such fury, that, with howls of rage, he dashed it into the fireplace, and then, being overcome by sleep, subsided onto a skin rug and snored.

Reine made tropical love to the widow, who encouraged him to such an extent that, when overcome by sleep, his head was pillowed comfortably upon her bosom, to which she made not the slightest protest, but appeared to consider it the most natural thing in the world, as indeed it was, if we except the subsequent inconvenience of a clear imprint of the damaged ear—a mark she carried for two days.

The Duchess, who, it will be remembered, was the first to be affected, slept quietly with her fair head pillowed upon the contents of an overturned potato-salad bowl. The mayonnaise sauce, however, being of an acid nature, seriously deranged her complexion, which had for its basis an alkali ; to which must be added the fact

that her teeth—which were new and did not yet fit perfectly—had fallen out and had been attached by some mischievous person to her nose, thus rendering her appearance anything but dignified.

The M.P., who was possessed of a beautiful tenor voice, was bellowing a hunting song, and with purple face and straining, stringy neck, striving with might and main to drown the other noises with his own.

Mr. Ramuz was amusing himself by throwing cream éclairs at a statue of the *Vénus Aphrodite* which adorned one corner of the room. The sculptured attitude of this beautiful figure—under the circumstances—appealed so forcibly to his unduly excited sense of humour, that he literally howled with laughter.

Mrs. Ramuz, who was fat and elderly, and suffered from biliousness, aggravated in this case by over-eating, was—but there, the fault was not hers, and after all she is a lady, so let us say no more about it.

What would have happened if the alcohol had not closed of its own accord in two hours one dare not think.

STOLEN FRUIT

*A light, digestible problem play
with a moral. Being a fore-
cast of the probable effect of
cheap divorce.*

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

MAUD (<i>wife of Reggie</i>)	} <i>recently</i>		
REGGIE (<i>husband of Maud</i>)		} <i>married and</i>	
GLADYS (<i>Maud's sister</i>)			} <i>housekeeping</i>
JOHN (<i>husband of Gladys</i>)			

SCENE: *A morning-room in the Far East.
Time, 9 a.m. The stage is divided in the
centre by a screen about 6 feet high. Right
side of stage "A," left side of stage "B."
Each side set with table laid for two; hand
fans in "A." (REGGIE and JOHN in dress-
ing gowns; MAUD and GLADYS in negligé,
hair untidy.)*

*Enter REGGIE, who looks carefully round the
room; head only in door: tiptoes to*

GLADYS'S *chair*, and places a note under her *serviette*. *Exit*. (*Put in plenty of action and mystery.*)

Enter JOHN. *Ditto* under MAUD'S *serviette*.
Exit.

Enter MAUD. *Takes note; exit*. *Enter*
GLADYS, *ditto, ditto*.

Enter REGGIE, *looking very dissatisfied with life*.
Sits; sighs deeply.

Enter MAUD, *fanning herself wearily*.

MAUD (*sits*). Good morning, dear.

REGGIE. Good morning (*glances at her*)—
e-er—dear. Where's the butter?

M. In the cruet, dear.

R. In the cruet?

M. Yes, dear, in the salad oil bottle. I can't
prevent it going all runny this weather.

R. (*groans*). Now where on earth is the
mustard: in the sugar-basin or the cream-jug?

M. (*crossly*). There isn't any on the table.
You will surely admit that it is not usual to eat
mustard with eggs?

R. My dear Maud! The kind of eggs you
manage to get are not usual eggs. With these
mustard is virtually a necessity—like powder

to a woman who recognises that she can no longer poach with snares. (*Places a spoonful of something out of the sugar-basin into the coffee, stirs, and tastes. Makes awful face.*)

M. (*hastily*). Oh, be careful, dear ! That's salt.

R. Salt in the sugar-basin?

M. Yes, dear ; the last cook stole the salt-cellars when he left—the silver ones, you know, that Mrs. Falconer gave us. I do hope you have not spoilt your coffee?

R. (*with an air of resignation*). Oh no, not at all. (*Tastes.*) I prefer it like this ; it reminds me of the time I spent in Obama. Sea-bathing, don't you know? Happy days !

M. You don't look very well this morning.

R. No ; I think the kerosene we had in the soup last night disagreed with me.

M. Reggie, how you exaggerate ! The soup only smelt of kerosene.

R. Oh, I beg your pardon ; evidently it was my mistake, but my impression was that the kerosene smelt of soup. Hullo ! What's this? Eggs again?

M. Yes, dear ; I'm afraid of anything else during the hot weather.

R. (*despondently*). I've counted eighteen consecutive, uninterrupted boiled-egg mornings.

Really, Maud—(*opens egg, starts back in horror and jumps to corner of room*). Good Lauder! Look out, Maud, it's moving!

M. Whatever is the matter?—is it bad?

R. Bad? Oh no, it isn't bad exactly! It evidently *was* bad at one time, but it is getting quite strong now.

M. Oh dear! (*Lays head on arms and commences to cry. Stops suddenly, sniffs, then takes fan and fans the egg vigorously, looking reproachfully at REGGIE.*)

Enter GLADYS and JOHN, other side of screen.
Both stand suddenly rigid and sniff.

GLADYS and JOHN (*together*). Phew! Great Scott! (*J. rings hand bell violently*).

Enter MAID.

MAID (*handkerchief to nose; staggers*).
PHEW! Great Scott!

[*Exit quickly.*

JOHN (*shouting over screen*). Are you there, Reggie?

R. (*in a faint voice*). Yes, I am sorry to say I *am*.

J. What on earth is this horrible smell?

R. Only some of Maud's cooking.

MAUD (*indignantly*). It isn't, John ; it's an egg.

J. How many?

M. Only one.

J. One ! Great Scott ! Ask Reggie to reconstruct it and bring it out under another name, or to hit it with something. I say, Maud, what did you *do* to it?

M. Nothing. Really. It did it all by itself.

GLADYS. Fancy making all this disturbance about a mere egg.

R. *I'm* not making any disturbance, it's the mere egg. It's doing it all by itself.

G. Why doesn't somebody take it away?

OTHERS (*all together*). Yes, why *doesn't* someone?

G. (*holding her nose, and softly*). Reggie, take it away, there's a good chap !

REGGIE, *after considerable hesitation, does so with every sign of disgust ; returns and continues meal with MAUD in dumb show. JOHN sits down to the table with GLADYS, on the other side of the screen.*

J. Hullo. What's this? Fish?

G. (*fanning herself wearily*). Yes, dear.

J. Now, didn't I tell you I would *not* have fish in the house during the hot weather?

G. Yes, dear.

J. Then why, oh! why in the name of all that's olfactory did you bring it in?

G. (*indignantly*). But, John dear, it's tinned fish.

J. (*horried*). Tinned! TINNED fish! (*Clasps his hands, throws eyes upwards and mutters.*)

G. My dear man, heaps of people eat tinned fish.

J. Of course! anybody knows that. You can read it in most of the papers, under the heading "Inquests." (*Waves his hand*) I'll pass.

R. (*shouting over screen*). John, what have you for breakfast?

J. Breakfast? Don't exaggerate! There's some open-air fish, which no doctor would pass, unless he were very short of patients indeed, and—oh! this is too bad, fly-papers—fly-papers on the breakfast-table. Ugh!

G. (*shouts*). They aren't fly-papers, Reggie, really; they're b-buttered toast.

R. Ah, fish. Now, I *do* like fish.

J. Fish! Pshaw! Give *me* eggs.

R. (*thoughtfully*). Hum! there are some eggs here—four, not counting the one that was scratched.

J. (*thoughtfully*). Hum ! There is some fish here. It says so on the tin, evidently in order to save the coroner trouble.

M. (*evidently getting an idea*). Go and eat your horrid fish. I don't care.

R. (*shouts*). I say, John, I'll trade your fish for my eggs.

J. It isn't my call ; I'll leave it to my partner. What do you say, Gladys?

G. No trumps, John. I'm dummy.

J. All right, I'm coming ; don't disarrange the table. That is, of course, if Mau—— your wife doesn't object.

M. Come in, John ; I'll double. No ; wait. (*Hastily arranges hair at glass, pulls in waist belt. G. does ditto ; takes some flowers from vase, pins in bodice, and uses vanity-bag.*

JOHN and REGGIE watch the process.

J. Hum ! poor Reggie !

R. Hum ! poor John !

M. All right, John.

G. All right, Reggie.

JOHN and REGGIE change sides.

J. I say, Maud, couldn't we always have breakfast like this?

M. Why, do you like it?

J. *Like it.* Good heavens, why I—— (*Commences to get up out of chair.*)

M. (*hastily*). No. Sit down. (*Looks fearfully at screen and places her hand over his.*) Poor old boy !

JOHN *starts to get up again.*

M. No, no ; keep still. You *know* I don't like that sort of thing.

J. What sort of thing? I did nothing (*indignantly*).

M. No. But I dare not think what you would do *often*, did I not keep you in check.

J. (*eagerly*). For instance?

M. I said I dare not think.

J. Isn't it extraordinary that in so many cases the man marries the wrong woman?

M. Poor old boy ! Are you so *very* unhappy? (*Strokes his hair.*)

J. Oh, I say, Maud ! (*Starts determinedly from his chair.*)

M. Now then, John, will you sit down or shall I have to go away?

J. (*crossly*). Well, don't touch me, then.

M. Why, don't you like me to? You used to purr when I stroked your hair.

J. You know it isn't that. (*Folds his arms.*) But you can do it again if you like, *now*. I've

realized that it is very wrong to be in love with another man's wife ; and you may be sure that I shall hold myself in hand in future.

M. (*evidently disappointed, after a pause*). Oh !

J. (*with great determination*). Nothing you could do would move me—NOTHING.

M. (*despairingly*). Oh, John !

J. Nothing ! You can try if you like.

MAUD *rises from chair, places her face very close to his, looks into his eyes, and makes a moue.* JOHN *wriggles uncomfortably.*

M. (*softly, with a sigh*). What an extraordinary thing it is that so many women marry the wrong man.

J. (*starts up violently, and tries to embrace her*) Maud, Maud, you don't mean——?

M. (*hastily starting back, evidently frightened*). No, of course I don't. Sit down. I don't think you've got yourself in hand a bit.

J. Well, hang it all ! You know that was *too* much. I certainly did not expect you would hug and kiss me.

M. How dare you talk like that? I did not !

J. Of course I was speaking metaphorically.

M. Well, please act metaphorically.

J. (*violently*). All right ; please consider that I have metaphorically taken you in my arms and kissed you, and that the kiss lasted ten minutes, because you metaphorically would not let me go.

MAUD *starts to leave the room, but JOHN goes after her and persuades her to stop ; their voices fall to a whisper and REGGIE and GLADYS on the other side take up the dialogue.*

R. Isn't it extraordinary how many ill-assorted marriages there are?

G. Isn't it?

R. Now, personally I *love* fish.

G. *How* funny. So do I.

R. Especially tinned fish.

G. (*doubtfully*). Hum ! (*Pause*). Y-e-e-s?

R. (*hastily*). What a sweetly pretty dress you have on.

G. (*pouting*). Pooh ! it doesn't fit me closely, but I'm glad you like it. John calls it a "sar-torial typhoon."

R. What an infernal shame ! It seems hardly credible. (*Bends over her and examines it slowly from her feet upwards, meantime whistling "Songs of Araby"; arranges the*

"hang," and finally, as his glance travels upwards, looks into her eyes, and after a pause, sighs deeply, and murmurs) Divine——

G. (*slowly and distinctly*). Sit — DOWN — Reggie.

R. (*with a gesture of despair*). Yes, darling —I—I mean, yes, Gladys.

G. Reggie !

R. Isn't it remarkable that two women can be sisters, and yet differ so widely in temperament? Now, Maud is essentially *unemotional*.

G. Indeed.

R. (*musingly*). Yes. Now, I'm convinced you could not possibly be unemotional to any one who was very, *very* fond of you. You know what I mean—**AWFULLY** fond of you. Hum ! —uncontrollably fond——

G. (*primly*). Really?

R. Y-e-e-s. I believe if a man were to kiss you—provided of course the man knew how to kiss really well, don't you know?—you would positively sparkle and radiate uncontrollable enthusiasm.

G. (*indignantly*). I should do nothing of the kind !

R. Pooh ! I defy you to convince me of that.

G. You must really bear in mind that I have no inducement to demonstrate.

R. (*crossing his legs*). Purely in the interest of the argument, I should have no objection to lending myself for the experiment. Proceed. (*After a pause, rises.*)

G. (*sternly*). SIT DOWN, Reggie.

R. Aha ! Offended, eh?

G. My dear Reggie, I am not offended in the least. It isn't that I don't want you to want to kiss me, it's simply that I don't want you to do it. If I ever have to entertain a man who I feel has no desire to kiss me, I experience that horrible sensation of dread that I am about to yawn myself to death.

Enter MAID, " B " side.

MAID. Beg pardon, mum ; a man is at the door with a bill from——

G. (*without turning round waves her away*). Oh, go to the master !

[*Exit MAID.*

Enter MAID, " A " side.

MAID. Beg pardon, sir ; a man is at the door with a bill from——

J. Oh, go to the devil, and—here—give the chap a dollar, and tell him to call again.

MAID *throws up her hands in horror.*

Exit after laying the morning paper on the table.

M. Oh, John, *do* let us see what is in the paper.

J. (*opens paper and scans it casually. Reads*). Um ! "Eight thousand men killed in the war yesterday ; renewed fighting expected to-day."

M. (*yawns*). Yes, yes ; but look and see if they have that sketch of the Paris gown they promised in the ladies' page to-day.

JOHN *turns over, starts suddenly, and stares at the paper with horror.*

M. Oh dear ! Whatever has happened ?

J. Phew ! Great Britain ! Look here ! (*reads very loudly in his excitement, at which REGGIE and GLADYS start, listen spellbound, and, creeping to screen, peep over, holding one another's hands. Reads*). The Divorce Commission have decided to recommend facilities for divorce at a cost not to exceed ten pounds. Suits can be instituted upon the following grounds :—Mum—mum—mum—and incompatibility of temperament.

REGGIE and GLADYS *hastily bob down behind screen, and each looks at the other in consternation. All must here convey the impression that it has just occurred to them*

what the result of this might be in their own case. Expression slowly changes to fear. MAUD and JOHN start guiltily apart.

M. (*speaks in a shaky voice*). Oh, John, is—er—are eggs incompatibility of temperament? You know what I mean.

REGGIE, *on the other side, strikes a tragic attitude.*

J. I don't know about eggs, but I feel sure fish is—must be—(*in a voice of despair*) especially *tinned* fish.

MAUD *thoughtfully, and in consternation, whistles. Both become lost in thought, looking the picture of despair.*

REGGIE and GLADYS (*on the other side*) *sit dejectedly at table, head in hands. They move chairs further apart, and turn slightly away from each other.*

JOHN and MAUD *do the same.*

R. (*speaks in a deep, despondent voice*). I say, you know, just suppose tinned fish—

G. (*piteously*). Yes, but just suppose eggs—(*uses handkerchief*).

R. (*glancing at table, where pieces of torn letter are lying*). Good heavens, Gladys, is that my letter?

G. (*snatching it up*). Oh dear ; (*looks hurriedly round the room*) I am so frightened ; quick, what shall I do with it? (*Thoughtfully*) I've read somewhere of people who dare not risk the discovery of their letters, or despatches, or something, chewing them up and swallowing them——

R. All right, go ahead.

G. Reggie ! Won't you do a little thing like that for me?

R. (*with an heroic gesture, commences to chew up letter ; after a minute, his mouth full of paper*). I say, Gladys, have you any Worcester Sauce? The paper isn't so bad, but the ink ! Oh Lord, the ink !

G. Oh, do be quick !

R. (*pointing*). There's some more there ; you can be getting on with that. (*Puts hand to head, and stops.*)

G. Oh dear, what is the matter?

R. I don't know ; I think I'm going to be very, very ill.

G. Swallow it, swallow it !

REGGIE *tries and fails.*

G. Do you think it would help if I pushed it down with a spoon?

R. (*tragically*). One step nearer, and I'll—oooah—oh Lord! (*uses handkerchief to take paper out of mouth. He carefully sweeps up remaining bits of letter and puts them in his pocket*).

G. (*hastily*). No, no; not there. (*Takes them and throws them out of window.*)

R. I think I'll be getting back; perhaps Maud wants me.

G. (*without looking at him*). Yes, yes—er—good—bye.

R. (*coughs loudly and shouts*). Good-bye; I'll go in and help Maud to design to-night's dinner; we have some people coming.

J. (*other side, shouting*). Well, *au revoir*; I'll go and see if Gladys wants anything.

They resume their own sides of screen, and in each case husband and wife sit facing each other, head in hands (at chin), and look deeply into each other's eyes. After a pause, all sigh heavily, and mutter, "Mum—mum—mum—and incompatibility of temperament." They all turn and sit facing the audience looking very, very thoughtful.

GLADYS glances shyly at JOHN and MAUD ditto at REGGIE. Neither JOHN nor REGGIE looks at his wife, but each shifts his chair closer to her, and at the signal given by the moving of the chair by each, REGGIE and JOHN simultaneously stretch out a hand to their wives, who do the same to their husbands, each looking shamefacedly away from the other. When they find each other's hands, after some suitable acting, they rise and kiss passionately.

ALL (*with a sigh of relief and satisfaction, loudly*). O-o-o-h, what a narrow escape !

(*Slow Curtain.*)

THE SPIRITUAL PULL

WITHOUT rising from a recumbent position in his bunk, the carpenter of the S.S. *Glendune* screwed his head round to an almost incredible angle, and spat cleanly and neatly through the port.

"Yes, these 'ere American papers tickle me to death, as the Yanks say," he remarked to the fourth officer, who was sitting on the settee, hopefully anticipating a share in the bundle of papers just received by the carpenter from the agent's office ; " 'ere's some stuff about the 'Oly Rollers, religious sect, y' know, and the Faith 'Ealers, and the Passionate Proclaimers, War on 'Ell, All Souls' Salvage Corps (not bad that, eh?), 'Ell Fire Fighters, an' a lot more ; but in my opinion Old England can 'old 'er own in anything except shore superintendents ; for there's only one worse super than an English one, an' that's a Scotch. But

to come back to religion—no, don't move, Mr. Butterton ; 'ere I get out the bottle that's inside that cupboard, in the port sea-boot, and 'elp yerself—to a glass out of the rack, and pass me the bottle so as I can give yer a peg."

The speaker thereupon poured out a peg for the fourth officer into the glass that the latter was holding out for the purpose.

"There you are," said the carpenter briskly.

"Of course I'm here," replied the fourth.

"I mean, there's your peg."

"Peg, where?" questioned the fourth, looking searchingly into his tumbler. "Oh, ah ! of course, I can see it now—by holding the glass a bit on one side. Whoa ! go easy with that water now ; don't go and drown it, poor little thing !"

The carpenter poured out a very modest peg for himself, by way of example, and resumed :

"Now, last time I was 'ome I got to know of a chap 'oo called 'isself a Colonel in the Spiritual Guides ; an' from what I could gather from 'is Glory Allelujah description of the sect, they used to 'old meetings in a dark room in perfect silence, which meetings they called 'Detachment and Meditation,' the object being, by gettin' rid of all earthly thoughts from their minds (if they 'ad any minds), to invite the

thing they called the Spiritual Pull. This Spiritual Pull, so far as I could understand, was the inclination that first came into their empty 'eads after the light went out, and was supposed to be spirit guidance.

"I was walkin' out with a 'ousemaid at the time 'oo was a member of the sect, and I attended one of the meetings. Of course, we 'ad the 'ole business explained to us in a kind of starting-off sermon, but except that the preacher implored us to do eggsactly as we were told by our inner promptin's (whatever that is), I don't remember much else of the discourse; but that was because Julia—which was my girl's name—was so eggscited that she was very nearly sittin' on my lap, and I was afraid if I moved she would notice it an' shift. So particular that girl was, you wouldn't believe.

"Well, almost direckly after the light went out I got my innard promptin', or spiritual pull, or whatever it is, strong—towards Julia it was too—so I put my arm round 'er and 'eld on tight. Of course she wanted to struggle, but I told 'er not to interfere wiv the action of my innard promptin's, and she says, 'If it really is your inward promptin's, O.K., Jack,' she says, 'but if you're up to any of your old tricks again, look out! that's all,' she says;

and I says 'I will,' says I, 'I'll look out,' I says, 'but don't you move just yet,' says I. 'O.K.,' says she, and she didn't move neither—wot-ho !

"Just then some swivel-eyed, red-'aired, pock-marked stiff over to the other side of Julia got the same 'pull' as wot I 'ad, but a most eggstrordinary strong innard promptin' come to me, direckly I saw it, to put it acrost 'im, so I drew off wiv my saw arm an' fetched 'im a biff under the ear wot sent 'im plowin' along a row of detached meditators, 'oo in their turn got immejit innard promptin's to knock seven bells out of 'im wiv their chairs, which they did—wot-ho !

"It was just when some other bloke took a spiritual pull at my watch-chain—which move of 'is I was prompted to stop wiv my knee in 'is face, cuttin' my best trousers on 'is teeth, dammit—that a woman's voice screams 'Leggo ! turn up the lights,' and a man's voice growls 'Lights ! lights ! or she'll 'ave my other eye out too.' And then the lights went up.

"You should just a-seen that room ! My word, Miss Weston ! there was far more detachment than meditation. Wot-ho !

"The red-'aired bloke was dead—at least, 'e looked it : any'ow, it took four kicks to bring

'im to, an' good uns at that, and even then 'e looked 'arf baked, sort ov addled-like, even allowin' for the 'orrible thing 'e was to start wiv. 'Is mouth was like a 'ole in a slab ov red lead, and sich a bump as 'e 'ad on 'is 'ead you never see the like ov afore, except it might be the other one 'e 'ad under 'is ear. Almost like three 'eads it was.

"Just then I catches sight ov some linen stuff over by the red-'aired bloke, so I gives 'im another kick and clears 'im out ov the road, and there's Julia, the white stuff bein' 'ers.

" 'Wot's the time? " she says.

" 'Time to get up,' says I, cheerful-like. ' 'Ow do you feel? '

" 'I don't know yet,' she says, 'but 'ow do I look?' says she; 'that's what I want to know.'

" 'Rotten,' says I.

" That was no lie, neither.

" 'Just see if you can get my 'air out of the cane seat of this 'ere chair,' she says, leanin' 'er 'ead over, 'and don't pull like that; we aint married yet, are we?—oooer.'

" 'Better cut it,' says I, after tryin' for five minutes. You see, some bloke 'ad been a-tryin' to gouge out my right eye; probably the red-'aired bloke, and it smarted somefink awful, 'is

thumbs bein' that dirty you'd hardly believe, and I couldn't see none too well.

" 'Not for all the Jacks in the world,' says she, 'and if you can't get it out I'll soon find some one as can,' she says.

" 'Not if I knows it,' says I ; 'leastways, not if they turn the lights out again ; and if this is your religion,' says I, strugglin' wiv 'er 'air, 'I'm a-goin' to stick to the Primitive Methodists. This 'ere's a bit too jerky for me—startlin', I calls it.'

" 'You get on wiv my 'air, and don't talk about things wot you don't understand,' she says.

" 'Is my 'at on straight?' she says, tryin' to pin somethin' on 'er 'ead, after I'd stood 'er up endways.

" 'Wot 'at?' says I.

" 'This 'at, stoopid,' she says, pointin' to the thing she was a-tryin' to pin on to 'er 'air.

" 'Ho, that !' says I ; 'why, I thought it was a shawl.'

" And that was no lie neither.

" 'Just then a red-faced bloke—'orrible ugly 'e was too, and that 'ot you wouldn't believe—stood up on the platform and commanded silence, which 'e got, except for one fight in the left-'and corner of the room wot no one could stop, and some women wot was cryin', an' 'e says, says 'e—shoutin' 'e was too :—

“ ‘Ladies and gentlemen,—A very unforchunit thing ’as ’appened, most dis’eartenin’, except to the very devout,’ says ’e, ‘amongst which I can, I am sure, include every one ’ere to-night,’ ’e says, ‘and that is,’ says ’e, ‘that our Colonel,’ says ’e, ‘’as been an’ gone an’ skinned out wiv the collectin’-box,’ ’e says ; ‘nearly seventeen quid,’ says ’e, ‘an’ left this note,’ ’e says, readin’ from a bit of paper ’e ’ad in ’is ’and :—

“ ‘ “DEAR BRETHEREN,—

“ ‘ “I have got a spiritual pull. My inner promptings have called me away to a more fruitful field. Hurriedly I obey, questioning not ; neither do I pause by the way. Peace to all is the prayer of

“ ‘ “Your late Colonel,

“ ‘ “FREDERICK SMITH.”

“ ‘My friends,’ says the red-faced bloke, ‘there are black sheep in every flock ; do not, I beseech you, let this——’

“ ‘But ’ere the red-’aired bloke, ’oo ’ad recovered a bit, ’it ’im over the ’ead wiv a chair, and another general mix up started to spread itself about, so I grabbed Julia an’ ran ’er outside, only gettin’ one clip on the jaw all the way. No, Mr. Butterton, I don’t think the Yanks

can give us any points on religions, 'cause we've got mostly all there is, an' a lot more than wot you've ever 'eard of ; and let me tell you the Primitive Methodists are quite good enough for me ; there ain't no — nonsense about them, and——”

But here the mate thrust his head in at the door, and with withering sarcasm enquired whether, having had a long convalescence, the carpenter—to whom, by the way, he alluded as Chips—was now strong enough to come forward and take the covers off number two hatch, or whether it would be necessary to send an ambulance.

I O U EVERYTHING

TOMMY JUDD obtained the prettiest wife in Balham. So pretty was she that there was hardly a woman who had a good word for her till she got married. You see, in Balham there were several mothers with several daughters, and competition was keen. We are a nation of traders, and if another person has a better article than ours to offer, it stands to reason that there must be something wrong with that article. There being a law of libel, it is unsafe to put our thoughts, or rather that which we desire others to think, into words. Besides, it is unnecessary to do so ; a shrug of the shoulders at the right moment, and, *implicite*, the thing is done.

Now, by adopting these means, the matrons of Balham made a serious mistake. Hearing so much talk about the girl, and being given to understand that she was an influence for the bad, the youth of Balham decided to trot round and see her, in order to ascertain whether the

stories were true. At the back of their minds perhaps they hoped—but never mind, we can only guess anyhow.

Tommy Judd was one of the first. Tommy was home on leave, his business being “something in a bank” in a town called Shanghai, in China, where bad people are sent to prepare them for better things, and those who go from choice do so because they do not know any better. When the latter discover their mistake, very few of them have enough money to get away, and so the town is fairly well populated.

Now, when Tommy Judd met the girl, and talked to her for ten minutes, he said to himself, said Tommy, “What awful liars people are !” which, after all, if neither an original nor a polite remark, at least has the merit of being true.

So Tommy, having more time on his hands than any of the other competitors, laid himself out in a most determined manner to win the girl, and being a very decent sort of a chap, succeeded. Not that I wish to infer that he wouldn't have won even had he not been a decent sort of a chap, because one has only to get to know a few husbands to realize that girls, as a rule, do not know how to discriminate.

So Mrs. Judd came to Shanghai.

Of course, Mrs. Judd immediately became the rage. You would have no cause to wonder at this had you seen her. The bank manager invited Tommy to dinner on several occasions, and always added, as a kind of afterthought, "Mind you bring your wife."

"Thanks," Tommy would reply, "I will."

Now Mrs. Judd was the nicest little woman in the world, as true as steel, and as good as gold; but the flattery and compliments she received began to turn her golden head. She commenced to think that she was **SOME-BODY**, whereas she was, in reality, only **MRS. JUDD**.

If it hadn't been for his wife, Tommy would never have become a member of three clubs, and he certainly would not have had a shroff round from the dressmaker's and milliner's every month. Neither would he have had to take a house and furnish it, but then the little girl couldn't ask people to a boarding-house. But Tommy paid up, and acknowledged to himself that it was worth it. So it was undoubtedly; but just because a diamond tiara is cheap, it doesn't follow that we can buy it.

Then came the time when the end of the month was a dread, but Tommy took care that the dread was his alone. "The little girl

must never know," said Tommy to himself, over and over again.

At last he could see that expenses must be cut down at any cost. He would make the suggestion to his wife that night in an off-hand way ; tell her about the necessity of saving, or life insurance, or—oh ! anything. What an infernal nuisance money was ! He didn't know quite how many I O U's there were out, and he didn't want to think. "Maskee," said Tommy, "something is sure to turn up soon."

With the good resolution to own up fixed in his mind, Tommy went home that night feeling as if he had done wrong and was about to confess a fault like a naughty child. As he put his key in the door, he sighed, and when little Mrs. Tommy ran to meet him he felt as if he couldn't look her in the face. But he didn't have to, because Mrs. Tommy kissed him very quickly, and then buried her face in his shoulder, and he could feel that she was trembling.

"Why, Kitty," said Tommy, "what's the matter? "

But Kitty wouldn't look up, and Tommy began to wonder. He fancied, however, that this was, after all, only a playful trick, braced himself for the ordeal, and was about to "get it over," when a muffled voice from somewhere on his

shoulder said "Tommy!" very softly, and as if the name were the sweetest in the world; which, of course, it isn't—except to some women.

There was something about the tone that made Tommy start, take her face in his hands, and look right into her eyes. There were tears in them, and her cheeks were crimson, yet joy and pride shone there also, and Tommy read in her face a message that any man can read by instinct; an unconscious knowledge that lies dormant till called up by that look in the eyes of the woman a man has chosen.

So Tommy put off telling her about the necessity of reducing expenses after all, and they had a bottle of the best champagne instead. Tommy now forgot all about money. If he could think of anything that Mrs. Tommy might like, he promptly got it by the simple method of signing his name. Money had no meaning to Tommy at this time, except as a means of giving Kitty things that would make her smile and look happy.

The day that Kitty's baby was born Tommy realized that there are problems in life—sacred problems—that are too big for the human mind to solve: wonders beyond the reach of learned men whose wisdom has lighted our path toward the infinite for a distance of about twelve inches.

Next morning Tommy went to the bank as usual, and was doing his very best to keep his mind on Mr. Somebody's account, when the manager sent for him.

"Take a seat, Mr. Judd," said he, as Tommy entered, "and—ah—you might close the door."

Tommy did so.

"I sent for you, Mr. Judd, to inform you it has come to my ears that you have managed to get yourself rather more deeply into debt than we consider it advisable to allow our employés to do. When an employé of the Company gets into difficulties of this kind, there is only one course open to the manager, and that is to request him to resign. How much money do you owe?"

"I don't know," replied Tommy.

"Then find out, please, and let me know in an hour."

"Yes, sir," and Tommy walked out of the office feeling dazed, crushed, and far more miserable than any man can feel who is considering himself.

Punctually to the minute, however, he was back once more in the manager's office.

"Well, Mr. Judd, how much?"

"Two thousand dollars, sir."

"Exactly?"

"One hundred and forty-three," added Tommy.

"Well, Mr. Judd, you understand that it is my duty to give you notice to leave. I prefer to give you one month's salary, and for you to leave at once."

"Yes, sir." Tommy set his teeth, and didn't move a muscle. If he was white, he couldn't help that, of course.

The manager wrote a cheque, and pushed it over. Tommy took it, turned, and had hold of the door-handle, when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Well, Tommy, you are not in our employ now, so that I can talk to you. Sit down."

Tommy sat down.

"I saw Mrs. Judd last week, Tommy," said the manager thoughtfully, but without looking up from his desk, "and, Tommy, you're the damnedest, silliest, best-hearted fool that ever lived.

"I want a man for Tientsin. The salary is rather more than you are getting at present, and if you care to take it, I can offer you the position. What do you say?"

But Tommy couldn't say anything. He tried twice, too.

"Then," continued the manager, "there is

the matter of your I O U's. Here is a cheque for \$2,143 ; you can pay me when—when you can. Now get out, and tell me as soon as possible when I can come to see Mrs. Judd."

"I don't want this money," said Tommy thickly ; "I can get through—somehow."

"You !" replied the manager, with his severest frown ; "do you imagine for a moment I care a damn what *you* want? Go home—and—talk to Mrs. Judd. You haven't told her anything about the way you've made an ass of yourself, of course? "

"No. You see, I couldn't very well—she——"

"Then don't."

"I won't," said Tommy. And he didn't.

SONG
OF A
SPRITE

A TALE
FOR FORWARD
CHILDREN

IT saddens me to have to see the children go
to school,
While laughing elves enjoy themselves all day
beside a pool
With wadding and bread on the end of a thread,
they fish for sticklebacks,
Or startle a hare in the spinney down there,
and then follow her up by her tracks.

I'll show you the way to enjoy a fine day if
you come to the wood with me ;
You lie on the ground never making a sound,
and I'll tell you what you'll see :
The conies go hopping and jumping and stop-
ping to wiggle their wobbly ears,
Then start upright alert with fright when some-
thing strange appears.

Of course they can't shout, so they signal "look
out," as they bang their hind feet on the
ground,

And thus warn one another to get into cover
when danger is lurking around.

Can you see the ground heaving where someone
is cleaving his way to the top from below?
That's his nose now appearing: at mine
engineering there's nothing the mole
doesn't know.

Look under that stone where it's dry as a bone,
can you see two tiny eyes

That shine out bright like stars at night?
there's a fellow you'll never surprise.

Nobody knows the direction he goes, but he's
off if you make a sound,

Like a flash of light he's out of sight, and into
his hole in the ground.

To me 'tis a mystery why you learn history,
facts about folks who are dead,

Continually hammer at somebody's grammar—
construe a Greek verse in your head.

If I ask you for botany you haven't got any—
zoology nobody tries,

You know what was said by the folks who are
dead, and can't see what's in front of your
eyes.

I am only a sprite and I may not be right,
or my teaching might cause some alarm,
But I certainly hold that the winning of gold
is productive of infinite harm.

Though we all have to work, for you'll find, if
you shirk, your existence is nothing but
strife,

Yet houses and wealth are no use to an elf
with a far higher object in life.

Though the grown-ups may say in their positive
way my contention is bad all along,
Yet it isn't polite to insist you are right, and
that others' opinions are wrong.

Please don't think I'm joking, or jealously
croaking because I've no houses or wealth,
For there once was a day—till I gave it away—
that I had lots of money myself.

Oh! the trouble and worry, the bustle and
hurry, enough to drive anyone mad,
There were only a few who would take what
was due, and the rest wanted all that I had.
No sooner I'd make it than someone would take
it, and run away chuckling with glee,
For not one of them knew what I'm now
telling you, that the money meant nothing
to me.

From the things that I'd seen in your world
where I'd been, I decided as soon as I
could

To give my possessions to those with professions
—return to my home in the wood.

If my life you compare with a busy man's
there, you'll admit I've more brains in my
head

Than to struggle and strive all the time I'm
alive, to be comf'tably off when I'm dead.

Take your Latin and Greek, which you learn
twice a week, and the dozens and dozens
of verses

Employed to explain that the number of slain
was so great that they couldn't find
hearses ;

If a Greek met a Greek, and they happened
to speak, they would wrangle and say
things unkind,

And they didn't use libel, the law or the Bible
—they can't have been really refined.

In the days of Greek heroes, and Cæsars and
Neroes, a peaceful man never could score,
So you hatched a deep plot, which could be
tommy-rot, if your party but stirred up a
war ;

Then you killed a few hundred when somebody
blundered, immediately leaped into fame,
Till a whack on the head left you thoroughly
dead, and you leaped into nothing again.

And the struggle for money is equally funny,
perhaps even funnier still :

You soon become wealthy but very unhealthy,
so hastily draw up a will,

For the fruit of your labours to go to your
neighbours, and some to your sorrowing
wife,

Whom another man marries, and worries and
harries the rest of her natural life.

Take your big millionaire, to whom trouble and
care is the daily reward of ambition,

He'll complain of a pain from the strain on his
brain, and his tummy's all out of condition.

Though he worked like a slave to make money
and save by a clever, ingenious ruse,

When he reaches old age he just trembles with
rage, for he sees it was really no use.

If you want to be smart you must study the
art of inserting your name in the Press,

Where they write up each function with wearisome
unction, and call you a social success ;

After much entertaining, the landlord's distraint-
ing, the butcher and baker want cash,
So you sell all your jewellery, pay for your
foolery—come back to earth with a crash.

Don't be cross at my chaffing, I cannot help
laughing, the thing's so deliciously quaint,
I don't wish to be rude, but when I'm in this
mood I can't exercise proper restraint ;
When you've got what you sighed for, the
object you tried for, you don't want to
see it again ;
When I think what you're after, I curl up with
laughter : how can you all be so inane?

So I'll give you some ointment to cure dis-
appointment, you use it to rub on your
eyes,
And after two hours out here with the flowers
you find to your utter surprise
You're surrounded with treasure you can't even
measure—for beauty alone has a worth ;
Thus God was benign in the smallest design
of the glorious beauties of earth.

There's enough in one day to make everyone
gay, if you but take the trouble to find it,
So let laughter bubble, don't double your
trouble by mournfully moping behind it.

Think how often you've worried and got your-
self flurried by watching some bogy ahead ;
Which when clearly seen showed how silly you'd
been, and your tears turned to laughter
instead.

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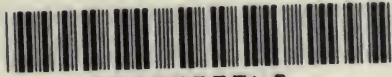
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